

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



100 249

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

Sam Houston
COLOSSUS IN BUCKSKIN

Sam Houston

COLOSSUS IN BUCKSKIN

By
George Creel



MCMXXVIII
COSMOPOLITAN BOOK CORPORATION
NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT 1928 BY GEORGE CREEL

All rights reserved including that of
translation into foreign languages
including the Scandinavian

MR

Printed in the United States of America by
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

Contents

	PAGE
THE BOYHOOD OF A TITAN	I
SAM HOUSTON WINS HIS SPURS	14
THE GREAT GESTURE	26
CO-LON-NEH THE ROVER	39
CANING A CONGRESSMAN	49
THE STORY OF TEXAS	63
A NEW LIFE IN A NEW LAND	76
THE TEXANS REBEL	91
A DISASTROUS VICTORY	104
THE ALAMO	119
THE LONE STAR REPUBLIC	132
THE GOLIAD MASSACRE	145
HOUSTON'S VALLEY FORGE	157
SAN JACINTO	172
"THE NAPOLEON OF THE WESTERN WORLD"	185
TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES	198
HOUSTON AS AN ADMINISTRATOR	213
HOUSTON AND HIS ENEMIES	226
LAMAR BRINGS RUIN	239
SANTA ANNA'S GRATITUDE	251
HOUSTON PLAYS WORLD POLITICS	265
ENGLAND AND FRANCE CONSPIRE	280
ANNEXATION	291
SAM HOUSTON AS SENATOR	302
SAM HOUSTON VS. TEXAS	318
LAST DAYS OF A TITAN	331

Illustrations

SAM HOUSTON	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
ANDREW JACKSON	<i>Facing page</i>	30
JAMES BOWIE		82
THE ALAMO		120
DAVID CROCKETT		128
THE SURRENDER OF SANTA ANNA		186
STEPHEN F. AUSTIN		218
SANTA ANNA		254

Sam Houston

[I]

THE BOYHOOD OF A TITAN

BETWEEN Hernando de Soto, first to blaze a trail through the wildernesses of the New World, and Kit Carson, last of the great frontiersmen, streams an endless procession of tremendous figures—Homeric in courage and achievement, flaming hugely against the dull background of uniformity; yet not in the whole colorful story of America is there record of a more amazing career than that of Sam Houston, the Colossus in buckskin who won an empire for his country.

From the cradle to the grave he walked with drama. As a boy he ran away from home to live in the wigwams of the Cherokees; serving under Andrew Jackson in the war against the Creeks, he led the charge that carried the Indian breastworks, receiving wounds that stretched him on the ground for dead; elected congressman and then governor by the adoring Tennesseans, even the presidency was not beyond his hopes, yet that happened which sent him into exile

Sam Houston

between two suns; seeking refuge with the Cherokees for a second time, drink and melancholy sank him to a dark level beneath the regard of men; entering Texas, resolved to build a new life in a new land, he lifted himself high above his degradation; and when the colonists rose in rebellion against the brutal tyrannies of a Mexican dictator, it was a clear-eyed, indomitable Houston who marshaled ragged volunteers, conducted masterful retreats and finally crushed Santa Anna and his army in a day of slaughter.

His later years were no less packed with color and high accomplishment. As president of the Lone Star Republic, he beat down the greeds, impatiences and vagaries of men, building firm and enduring foundations under the tottering superstructure of government; it was his shrewd statecraft, pitting European powers against America, that made annexation possible; in the Senate of the United States, although a Southerner and a slaveholder, he braved the hate and anger of the South by an unflinching stand against slavery and secession; contemptuous of threats against his life, he returned to Texas to run for governor on a Unionist platform and won against overwhelming odds; confronted with the necessity of declaring allegiance to the Confederate States, he suffered deposition rather than surrender his principles, and walked out of office to the humble cabin that was his home, old, poor and proscribed, but with his head unbowed.

A gigantic, towering figure, well worthy to rank

Sam Houston

with the illustrious and admired of America, yet, save in the Southwest, born of his courage, Sam Houston is but a name, known in detail only to the inquiring few. Out of the annexation of Texas, an expansion important enough in itself, came the Mexican War that added California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and Utah to the Union, yet schoolbooks either ignore Houston's connection with these epochal events, or else confine themselves to casual and misleading mention.

The history of the republic is stained throughout with similar instances of neglect and ingratitude. Robert Morris, whose unstinted generosity furnished funds in every one of George Washington's despairing hours, lived to know poverty and imprisonment for debt; John Paul Jones, unpaid and unhonored, was forced to take service under Catherine the Great that he might escape actual want, and George Rogers Clark, whose genius and courage snatched the trans-Alleghany region from England's grasp, was cast aside and forgotten. Twenty-five years after Vincennes, when Congress remembered to send him a sword, the starving old warrior made this answer: "When Virginia needed a sword, I found her one. Now I need bread."

Aside from the proverbial ingratitude of republics, it was Sam Houston's misfortune, as it was the misfortune of Polk and Tyler, to be a storm center in those campaigns of hate that had their culmination in

Sam Houston

the Civil War. The Whigs, led by Daniel Webster and John Quincy Adams, feared any increase in the political strength of the South, and fought the annexation of Texas with a fury that stopped at nothing. Facts of record were grossly perverted, and the Texans were held up to shame as ungrateful rebels, slavers, border ruffians and fugitives from society. Houston himself was attacked as an unscrupulous filibuster, a miserable drunkard, a tool of the Southern interests, sent into Texas by them to foment a rebellion and "establish a market for African slaves."

As a consequence of the South's defeat, the Whigs and their successors became the masters of public opinion; and what were frankly estimated as campaign lies at the time soon took on the color of great religious truths, and historians, either prejudiced or deceived, duly embalmed them.

More than mere injury to Sam Houston's name and fame has been worked by these slanders and neglects. History itself has suffered emasculations. Unless "Old San Jacinto" is known and understood, until he is given his just dues, there can be no clear and proper understanding of the stars that stud the flag. Leave Sam Houston out of the story, and the American chronicle is a thing of gaps and many unintelligibilities, for not only did he make history at various times, but in a great critical period, he *was* history.

His entire life, as a matter of fact, constitutes a contribution to Americana as important as fascinat-

Sam Houston

ing. A soldier in the war of 1812, he lived to see the North and South lock in deadly grapple, and during the fifty crowded years that lay between, he played a leading part in the national drama. More than that, Sam Houston, perhaps better than any other, stands as a perfect expression of the frontier spirit, and his portrait is a composite of those amazing men who rode the forest and plain as the Vikings rode the sea—reckless, dauntless, indomitable, simple as children, craftier than the Indian, arrogant and invincible in their courage and pride of blood, lawless yet curiously law-loving, and fleeing from civilization only to extend it.

Never was a biography more intensely American, for Sam Houston's forebears were among those who braved the perils of stormy waters and an unknown land that they might found a new order under which every soul might stand erect and have the right to aspire. The first Houstons that appear in the family record were stanch upholders of grim John Knox, and preferring exile to a surrender of faith, quit comfortable homes in Scotland to find a refuge in Ulster. When war clouds broke over unhappy Ireland, the clan gave fierce allegiance to William of Orange, and their names are found among those dour defenders of Derry who defied the armies of James II, and held out even when famine tore at every throat.

It was in this same year of 1689 that a John Houston led a band of Ulster Protestants across the

Sam Houston

sea to America, settling in Philadelphia, capital of William Penn's new and struggling colony. They must have been a clannish lot, for when a grandson, Robert Houston, led a second migration to Rockbridge county, Virginia, those that followed him were the third generation of the original Ulster group. Naturally enough, for they came of fighting stock, all answered Washington's call for men when the colonies took arms against England, and Samuel, a son of Robert, enlisted in Daniel Morgan's brigade of riflemen, and won some measure of distinction. A giant of a man, this Samuel, and marrying a wife no less tall and strong, he bred nine children of heroic size, one boy, in particular, possessing the proportions of Anak.

This lad, Sam, was born on March 2, 1793. His father, at the time, was a major and assistant inspector-general of the frontier brigades, doubtless holding to a military life out of his distaste for the laborious routine of a farm. This note of wildness, this love for the open road rather than any liking for fixed tasks and a fireside, came down to little Sam in full degree, for from childhood he had the untamability of a hawk, ever preferring the forest aisles to corn rows. The great outdoors called him, and to the day of his death he was more at home under the heavens than beneath a roof.

Mrs. Houston herself was not without the pioneer passion, for when her husband died in 1807, she gath-

Sam Houston

ered her six sons and three daughters about her, and crossed the Alleghanies into Tennessee. There were well-established settlements at Nashville and Knoxville, promising security and something of comfort, but the gaunt frontier mother passed them by and never halted until she came to the wilderness of Blount county. Picking a site at a point eight miles from the Tennessee River, then the boundary line between the whites and the Cherokees, she and her big-boned brood built a cabin, cleared ground for the corn patch and settled down to the hard task of winning a livelihood from the soil.

Even had young Sam possessed a liking for the schoolroom, his opportunities would have been few. Back in Virginia there was only the Old Field school, a rickety building once occupied by Washington University before its removal to Lexington, and in it he learned to write and read and spell. Tennessee had still fewer educational advantages to offer, and it is doubtful if Sam went to the neighboring "academy" more than a few months, for aside from his own antipathy to discipline of any kind, there were the drudgeries of farm labor that held him fast.

What saved him from illiteracy were the books that the Virginia pioneers brought with them in their saddle-bags—worn volumes of the classics that passed from hand to hand, giving color and delight to the long winter evenings. Pope's "Iliad" came into the boy's possession by loan or gift, and it was this book,

Sam Houston

as much as any other one thing, that formed his life and pointed his career. The story of the tremendous struggle on Scamander plain more than ever turned his mind away from peaceful pursuits, casting it in heroic mold, and the sonorous passages gave lasting color to his written and spoken word.

His brothers, older and more practical, viewed Sam's development with growing alarm, and in an effort to "break him to the traces," finally arranged for his employment as a clerk in the village store. Already a grown man, although only in his fifteenth year, the six-foot youth endured the hateful counter for a few short weeks, and then he calmly crossed the Tennessee River and asked lodging of the Cherokees. Oo-loo-tee-kah, a subchief, took him into his wigwam as a son, attracted by his size and spirit, and when his brothers found him out, the boy answered them in a grandiloquent speech that Pope himself might have envied.

"I prefer measuring deer tracks to tape," he said. "Better the liberty of the red men than your tyranny. If I cannot study Latin in the academy, I can at least read a translation from the Greek here in the woods, and read it in peace. Go home by yourselves. I will not return."

The Cherokees were a fairly high type of Indian, far removed from savagery, and Sam was soon the darling of the tribe. The learned men taught him the language until he knew it as thoroughly as his

Sam Houston

own tongue, the mighty hunters of the tribe took him with them as they threaded the wilderness, teaching him the secrets of wood and stream, and from the chiefs who spoke at the council fire he caught the art of oratory that was to serve him in such good stead throughout his stormy future. In return, he spouted Homer, doubtless delighting his hosts with nightly description of the grapple between Trojan heroes and cunning Greeks.

All through Sam Houston's adult life, the Indian influence could be plainly traced. There were the loathing of barter, the disregard of money, the childish vanity, the dignity, the invincible love of theatrics that mark the savage in his natural state. Wealth was his for the taking, but he died in poverty; even when drunkest and lowest, he bore himself with a pride that forbade liberties; his real rages were not more terrifying than his premeditated outbursts, and his dress always had a leaning to barbaric effects, giving old Andrew Jackson the chance to thank God for one man who was made by the Almighty and not by a tailor.

Now and then, during the three years of his life with the Cherokees, he returned to the settlement to see his mother and to purchase supplies and gifts. It was the debts thus incurred that brought him back to civilization, for even the slightest financial obligation, always rested upon his honor like an unbearable weight. Casting about for a means of raising money,

Sam Houston

he decided to open a country school, and the youth's superb confidence in himself may be estimated by the fact that he not only ignored his own lack of preparation, but majestically established a scale of prices far above the scale that had obtained. Each pupil was required to pay \$8 a term, one third in cash, one third in corn delivered at the mill, and one third in cotton cloth, the last item designed for the teacher's personal attire. It must have been a satisfactory, even happy experience, for when a United States Senator from Texas, and after having served as president of the Lone Star Republic, he made this confidence to a friend:

"When a young man in Tennessee, I kept a country school, being then about eighteen years of age, and a tall, strapping fellow. At noon after the luncheon, which I and my pupils ate together out of our baskets, I would go out into the woods and cut me a 'sour wood' stick, trim it carefully in circular spirals, and thrust one half of it in the fire, which would turn it blue, leaving the other half white. With this emblem of ornament and authority in my hand, dressed in a hunting shirt of flowered calico, a long queue down my back, I experienced a higher feeling of dignity and self-satisfaction than from any office or honor which I have since held."

His debts discharged, he closed the door of his school and entered the academy at Maryville, for success in his venture had given him the entirely mis-

Sam Houston

taken idea that teaching was his natural bent. The few months were a nightmare, for mathematics confused him and routine irked him, but even as he was contemplating a return to the Indians, young America challenged England's arrogant rule of seas, and President Madison called the nation to arms. Rushing forward among the first, twenty-one-year-old Sam took the silver dollar from the head of the drum, and became a private in the Thirty-ninth Regiment of Tennessee Volunteers. When his friends protested, urging him to wait for a commission, he answered in a speech strongly suggestive of pompous Mr. Pope:

"And what have your craven souls to say about the *ranks*? Go to with such stuff! I would rather honor the ranks than disgrace an appointment. You do not know me, but you shall hear of me."

His mother approved his action without stint, and at parting, handed him his musket with the admonition "never to disgrace it, for I had rather all my sons fill one honorable grave than that one of them should turn his back to save his life. Go, and remember that while the door of my cabin is open to brave men, it is eternally shut to all cowards." Even though it is more than probable that the son, in his reminiscences, dressed up her homely phrase to suit his own Homeric taste, there can be no question that the pioneer mother spoke in some such vein.

Despite his love for high-flown language, Sam Houston never lacked a resistless directness when it

Sam Houston

came to deeds, and after a time in various garrisons, given over to drilling and waiting, he found himself an ensign. Andrew Jackson, appointed a major-general, had set out for New Orleans with two thousand men, and it was the young soldier's ardent hope that he might be sent to serve under the fiery Tennessean who was already his idol. Before he could have his wish, however, "Old Hickory" was back at home, cursing Madison and his administration.

Jackson had gone as far as Natchez when he received an order to halt his southern march. For more than a month he marked time in the river town, and then came word from Washington, curtly stating that as the need had passed, his command was dismissed from service. At the bare thought of turning his men adrift, five hundred miles from home, without money and without provisions, Jackson's hot blood boiled, and he decided upon the first of those mutinies that won him the love of a people.

"These brave men," he wrote, "at the call of their country, voluntarily rallied to its insulted standard. They followed me to the field; I shall carefully march them to their homes." *And he did!* Running the risk of repayment being refused, he made himself liable for the expenses of the return journey, and when disbandment finally took place, it was in the public square at Nashville.

Sam Houston heard the news with deep concern, for with Jackson's troops dismissed, and the administra-

Sam Houston

1812

tion convinced that the British did not mean to carry the war into the South, nothing seemed more certain than that other Tennessee commands would also be disbanded. Even as he gloomily contemplated a return to civil life, the war-cry of the Creeks rang through the state, and again there was need of every fighting man.

[II]

SAM HOUSTON WINS HIS SPURS

IT WAS the dream of Tecumseh to succeed where Philip and Pontiac had failed. Traveling the country between the Great Lakes and Florida, the Shawano chieftain preached a mighty Indian confederacy that would not only check the white invasion, but even drive the hated paleface back beyond the Alleghanies, leaving the land to its red owners. Delawares, Wyandots, Winnebagos, Cherokees, Osages and Seminoles caught Tecumseh's fire as he journeyed from tribe to tribe, only the Creeks remaining cold. Occupying nine hundred square miles in the heart of Alabama and Georgia, it was a nation as rich as powerful, and the wise elders, seeing small profit in war, counseled peace.

To young Chief Weatherford, however, the word was cowardly and humiliating, for despite the Scotch blood in his veins, and the wealth inherited from a long line of Creek princes, he despised civilization and hated the masterful, overbearing whites with all the passion of his savage heart. As much of a bronze Apollo as Tecumseh, and no less gifted as an orator,

Sam Houston

Weatherford experienced small difficulty in inflaming the youth of the tribe, but the old men continued to frown him down, and it was not until the War of 1812 was well under way that the fiery Red Eagle felt strong enough to strike.

The summer of 1813 proved disastrous to American arms, and as British victories followed one another in swift succession, Weatherford shouted a call to battle in bold defiance of the elders, and the flower of the Creek nation followed him as he set forth to burn and kill. Fort Mims, a stockaded enclosure on the Alabama River a few miles above its junction with the Tombigbee, was selected for the initial attack. The gross negligence of a careless commander aided Indian cunning, and when the slaughter came to an end, the mutilated bodies of four hundred white men, women and children littered the bloody ground. To Weatherford's credit, he tried his best to stop the massacre, but his blood-maddened warriors would not be checked.

A wave of rage and horror swept the South, and in every state there was a call for volunteers to aid helpless Alabama and avenge the butchery. Tennessee was the first to take the field, and again her men were led by Major-General Jackson. Although suffering from a severe wound received in a street duel, and wasted by dysentery, Old Hickory raced his tattered troops over river and mountain, deep into the dark forests, and two pitched battles broke the back of the

Sam Houston

Indian menace. After that, however, followed months of black despair—a failure of supplies and men, the mutiny and desertion of half-starved volunteers—but Jackson's indomitable spirit triumphed at last, and in the early spring of 1814, supplies came to hand, together with reenforcements. Among those rushed to the front to fight under Old Hickory was Ensign Sam Houston.

Ready at last, Jackson marched away, and on March 27 came face to face with Weatherford in what each knew was to be a death grapple. The Indian position at To-he-pe-ka, or Horseshoe Bend, was one that seemingly possessed every defensive advantage. The peninsula, about one hundred acres in extent, was protected by the broad sweep of the Tallapoosa on the east, south and west, and the narrow opening at the north was breastworked by three tiers of huge pine logs. In event of defeat there were canoes for escape, cunningly hidden under the bushes that overhung the southern end of the peninsula. Here Weatherford had collected a thousand braves, well-armed with rifles furnished by Spanish and British agents from Pensacola, and all fired to fanatical pitch by screaming prophets who promised victory, proclaiming that at a signal the Great Spirit would open the heavens and destroy the whites in one mighty blast of wrath.

Jackson's first move was to send General Coffee and a detachment across the river to cut off any chance

Sam Houston

of escape by water, and when a rifle shot told him that the position had been gained, he opened fire upon the breastworks with his two small cannon. It proved a futile business, but even as the Indians jeered, Coffee struck a shrewd blow at the weak spot in the defense. The keen eyes of his Cherokee allies discovered the hidden canoes, and swimming under water like so many eels, they cut loose the boats and brought them back. No sooner were they beached than riflemen swarmed in, and rowing across the river, climbed the steep banks and attacked the Creeks in the rear.

The sounds of rifle shots and the smoke of burning wigwams informed Jackson of Coffee's bold move, and on the instant he shouted a command to charge the breastworks. The drums beat the long roll, and forward dashed the wild Tennesseans, careless of the storm of bullets that met them, every man fired to heroism by memory of Fort Mims. It was Sam Houston's first battle, but at the tap of the drum he raced forward, his mother's command finding full echo in his own bold spirit.

Swifter than the rest, the young ensign was the first to reach the breastworks, but as he gained the top in one tremendous leap, an arrow pierced his thigh. The shock would have felled a smaller man, but the giant did not even pause, and hurling himself to the ground with a mad bull roar, engaged the redskins with his sword. Others followed, and the Indians, finally giving way before the furious hand-to-hand fighting,

Sam Houston

sought cover in the tangled thickets that covered the peninsula.

"Pull it out," shouted Houston, catching a hurrying soldier by the arm, and pointing to the arrow. Twice the man tugged, and seeing that he was using caution rather than strength, the ensign cursed him for a coward.

"Try again," he gritted, adding this Homeric touch: "If you fail this time, I will smite you to the earth."

The third attempt tore loose the arrow, but such a burst of blood came from the jagged wound that Houston was compelled to climb back over the breastworks in search of surgical aid. As his bandages were being adjusted, General Jackson came by, and after one swift glance ordered the young ensign to go to the rear and take no further part in the fighting. Before his back was well turned, Houston was over the breastworks again, joining in the merciless pursuit that drove Indians from cover to cover, white men and red men fighting without thought of quarter, mad with hate and the lust of battle. Now and then some braves, less valorous than the rest, leaped into the river, but Coffee's unerring rifles riddled them while in midair.

All afternoon the slaughter waged, and at last two hundred Creeks remained, only survivors of the thousand that had offered battle in the morning with such high hope of victory. At one end of the breastworks, logs had been thrown over a deep ravine, and from this

Sam Houston

cave the Indians shouted their defiance. Sick of killing, and also mindful of the lives that it would cost to capture the stronghold, General Jackson sent forward an interpreter with a request for surrender, but at that moment a cloud darkened the spring sky.

"It is the sign," cried the prophets. "The Great Spirit gathers his thunderbolts."

Invincibly superstitious, the doomed Indians believed, and the answer to the messengers was a shower of bullets. As artillery could not be brought to bear upon the roofed ravine, a charge was necessary, yet such was the desperate nature of the hazard that Jackson shrank from giving a direct order, and asked for volunteers. Again it was Sam Houston who had the honor of showing the way to that company of heroes. Straight into the mouths of the Indian guns he plunged, the air thick with bullets, but it was not until he had almost reached the tangle of logs that two slugs tore through his right shoulder and struck him senseless to the ground.

There he bled while his fellows swept on to victory, and it was not until the last Creek had been killed that searchers lifted his body from under a weight of dead and found that the heart still beat. One ball was extracted, but the surgeons refused to probe for the other, declaring that it would be useless torture as there was not a chance to save him. All through the night he lay on the wet earth, uncovered, alone and unattended, for he was looked upon as one already

Sam Houston

dead, yet when morning came the steel frame still retained its vital spark. Putting him in a litter, they bore him to Fort Williams some seventy miles away, and for weary weeks he hung between life and death, lacking every medical attention and even proper nourishment.

There was that in him, however, that refused to die, nor were the ghastly sufferings of his homeward journey able to break his iron will to live. Riding in a rude litter, swung between two horses, he was borne through the forests of northern Alabama and half across Tennessee, a terrible way marked with the blood that dripped from his open wounds. Two months after the battle of Horseshoe Bend, his bearers brought him to his mother's door, the door that she had said would never be open to a coward. As the daughter of pioneers came at the call, it was only by the eyes that she knew the blood-stained skeleton to be her son.

As the wounded hero lay in his bed, however, ill unto death, glory seemed to have turned her back upon him. His companions were still in Alabama, reaping honors and rewards for their destruction of Creek power, and Old Hickory, now a major-general in the regular army, was preparing to march to Pensacola where Fortune awaited him, her hands piled high with favors. Convinced that the rude practitioners of Maryville were worse than useless, Houston had himself taken to Knoxville, but here the surgeons refused

Sam Houston

his case, frankly stating that his death was a mere matter of days. Again the iron constitution prevailed, and finally gaining expert medical care, Houston so far recovered by midsummer that he was able to mount a horse and set out on the long journey to Washington.

He reached the capital shortly after its capture and burning by the British, and as his furlough was unlimited, decided to ride to Virginia and revisit the scenes of his boyhood. The early winter months were spent with friends and relatives in Lexington, and along about the New Year, more or less recovered in health, he crossed the mountains into Tennessee. It was his hope to join Jackson in New Orleans, but at Knoxville he heard the news of the battle, a victory no less glorious because it happened to be fought after peace had been declared. Again there came a reduction in the army, but Houston, because of his gallantry at Horseshoe Bend, was not only retained, but promoted to a second lieutenancy, and assigned to the First Regiment on duty in New Orleans.

With two young men as his companions, one of whom, E. D. White, afterwards mounting to distinction as Governor of Louisiana, Houston set out in a skiff, and there were long, lazy days, not unmingled with danger, as they floated down the Cumberland to the Ohio and out into the broad Mississippi. Nearing Natchez, he records in his reminiscences, they saw a vessel that they thought on fire, and great was their astonishment to learn that it was not a flaming dere-

Sam Houston

lict, but a steamer that actually ran under its own power. Not without trepidation, the travelers changed to this puffing, smoking monster, and chugged a slow way to New Orleans.

Barely had Houston reported for duty before his wounds began to bother him, and again he gave himself into the hands of the surgeons. One of the Creek bullets, after shattering his arm, had torn its way into the back and lodged itself under the shoulder-blade. Its removal was decided upon, but the operation, while successful from a surgical standpoint, came close to costing Houston his life, and when spring found him still weak and ailing, he resolved to go to New York for more expert attention. Greatly improved, he returned to Tennessee in the late winter, and January 1, 1817, saw him assigned to duty at Nashville in the office of the adjutant-general of the Southern Division.

The service was colorless enough except for one clash that exerted a very powerful influence on Sam Houston's thought and life. Blackbirding was quite a flourishing industry at that time: bands of outlaws buying slaves in Spanish Florida, and smuggling them up through the Indian country to the border settlements. At first the young lieutenant proceeded against the smugglers merely as part of his official duty, but as he came to see the true horror of the barbarous traffic, he grew to a loathing of slavery itself that endured to his dying day. Backing his moral indignation by the forest cunning he had learned from the

Sam Houston

Cherokees, he beat the lawbreakers at every turn, and was soon in the way of putting an end to the infamous business.

In November, however, Houston was taken away from his duty and asked to act as subagent in the settlement of the government's dealings with the Cherokees. In 1816, certain chiefs of the tribe had been induced to part with a great tract of land in eastern Tennessee, but when the United States prepared to take possession, the large majority of the tribe rose in bitter protest, threatening bloody resistance. General Jackson, fearing another Indian outbreak, wrote the war office that Lieutenant Sam Houston was a man peculiarly fitted to deal with the situation, and when the appointment was made, used his personal influence in persuading his friend and follower to accept the disagreeable post.

It was not a job that appealed to Houston. He loved the Cherokees, and felt in his heart of hearts that they had been swindled, but inasmuch as the thing was done, and since he knew that any appeal to arms would but add to the measure of their disaster, he took the post. In no wise concealing his shame at the injustice done them, he pointed out the futility of war, and finally induced the young warriors to abide by the terms of the treaty. When all was done, he went with a delegation of chiefs to Washington for the purpose of receiving the purchase money, and to settle some remaining questions as to boundaries.

SAM HOUSTON

He had the thought, quite naturally, that his service would be praised, but, unfortunately, John C. Calhoun happened to be Secretary of War at the time. The aristocratic South Carolinian, formal, precise and narrowly conventional, was constitutionally incapable of other than misunderstanding and impatience with a woodsman type like Houston, and the very first meeting set fire to antagonism. The gigantic lieutenant appeared in full Indian dress, and Calhoun, regarding it as an impertinent affectation, did not hesitate in showing his displeasure.

As if this were not insult enough to a proud spirit, the imperious Secretary of War also called upon Houston to answer grave charges in connection with his suppression of slave smuggling. The blackbirders, operating through powerful friends in Washington, had filed accusations of official tyranny, gross abuse of power and actual dishonesty; and Calhoun, out of his anger, gave these slanders much larger credence than they deserved. Houston at once demanded an inquiry, and presented a mass of evidence that not only won him the most complete exoneration, but full and sincere apologies.

Not even the generous commendation of President Adams nor the contrition of Calhoun was sufficient to make Sam Houston abate his scowling front, for his resentments were Indian in their implacability. For five years he had served his country, enduring dangers, hardships and suffering far worse than death,

Sam Houston

yet his recompense was discredit, insult and injury. He had made up his mind to devote himself to a military career, for a soldier's life appealed to him, but the Washington experience worked a complete change in his plans. Leaving the capital in black anger, he herded his Cherokees back to the Hillabee towns, and under date of May 18, 1818, resigned his commission and left the army.

[III]

THE GREAT GESTURE

SAM HOUSTON'S decision to quit the army had boldness, for not only was he deep in debt by reason of long illness, but his health was still impaired to a degree that prevented manual toil, the one money-making activity that seemed open to him. With his usual superb self-confidence, however, he decided to become a lawyer, and presented himself at the office of James Trimble, a Nashville friend. When told that he might possibly win admission to the bar by eighteen months of hard study, he calmly remarked that his circumstances precluded any such expenditure of time, and that he would be ready for the examinations in six months. *And he was!*

The law, to be sure, was not then the refined and technical profession that it has since become. Patrick Henry, the greatest pleader of his day, did no more than study Coke, and Andrew Jackson was far from sure of his spelling even when lifted to the office of district attorney. As a matter of fact, the chief qualifications of a pioneer lawyer were a rather exact knowledge of human nature, rough and ready elo-

Sam Houston

quence, and personal courage. Litigation was a passionate business, and nothing was more common than bloody clashes in the courtroom or else the more formal resort to the dueling field.

Choosing the little town of Lebanon, thirty miles from Nashville, as a likely location, Houston rented an office for the large sum of one dollar a month, swung his shingle to the breeze, and then began his search for the proper sort of creditor. Isaac Golladay, the magnate of the small community, met every requirement, for not only was he a merchant but also the postmaster. From him the young lawyer obtained suitable apparel on long terms, and was likewise given credit for his letters, no small item in that day, as they cost twenty-five cents apiece. Going still further, the warm-hearted Golladay negotiated an arrangement with the tavern keeper by which Houston was trusted for bed and board until such time as fees began to come in.

Thirty-five years were to pass before Sam Houston had opportunity to repay these kindnesses, but the occasion found his gratitude unchanged, for another of his Indian traits was that he never forgave an injury nor forgot a favor. A son of Golladay, falling sick in a Texas town, was taken to the Houston home and given such loving care that his life was saved. Night after night the ex-president of the Lone Star Republic, then a United States Senator, kept vigil

Sam Houston

at the bedside of his "true friend's" son, pouring out medicines and even giving the sufferer hot foot-baths.

Houston's war record, backed by his picturesque personality, soon won him a profitable practice, and when he entered politics, as was inevitable, he mounted rapidly. [Standing six feet, six inches, and weighing 215 pounds, he was a splendid figure of a man, and the effect was heightened by a pair of leonine eyes, a majestic mane and the manner of an Olympian.] In 1819, he was appointed adjutant-general, with the rank of colonel, and on top of this, the people of the Davidson district elected him prosecuting attorney. The office necessitated a change of residence to Nashville, and his farewell speech to the citizens of Lebanon, delivered from the courthouse steps, gave splendid opportunity for one of those dramatic effects that his soul so loved.

"I was naked and ye clothed me," he cried, his great voice tremulous with emotion; "I was hungry and ye fed me; I was athirst and ye gave me drink." And while it reads bombastically enough, there must have been sincerity behind it, for one of the hearers left a report that the assemblage was moved to tears.

The office of district attorney proved more onerous than profitable, and resigning the post after a very creditable year of service, Houston returned to private practice. In 1821 he was honored by being elected major-general of the Tennessee militia, and in 1823, when but thirty years of age, the people of the ninth

Sam Houston

district sent him to Congress. This quick climb to the top was partly due to Houston's own very real gifts, but there can be no question that it was powerfully aided by the fact that he was at all times an ardent follower of Andrew Jackson.

By crossing the Florida line into Spanish territory, burning towns and hanging miscreants, Old Hickory had earned the condemnation of Cabinet and Congress; his high-handed conduct as military governor of the territory of Florida had also brought him censure from high sources, but the people roared their approval of the headlong warrior, and chose to consider the various rebukes as mere political backbiting. As early as 1822 the Tennesseans proposed him for the presidency, and Sam Houston was foremost in support of the candidacy. The relations between the two men, so similar in many vital respects, were those of father and son, and when the younger set forth for Washington, he carried this letter as his most prized possession:

Hermitage, October 4, 1823.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, ESQ.,

Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia.

DEAR SIR:

This will be handed to you by General Sam Houston, a representative to Congress from this State, and a particular friend of mine, to whom I beg leave to introduce you. I have known General Houston many years, and entertaining for

Sam Houston

him the highest feelings of regard and confidence, recommend him to you with great safety. He has attained his present standing without the intrinsic advantages of fortune or education, and has sustained, in his various promotions from the common soldier to the Major-General, the character of a high-minded and honorable man. As such I present him to you, and shall regard the civilities which you may render him as a great favour.

With a sincere wish that good health and happy days are still yours, I remain,

Your friend, and obliged servant,
ANDREW JACKSON.

Congress, at the time of Houston's entrance, was dominated by such giants as Clay, Webster and Randolph, and the Indian-fighting backwoods lawyer took fullest advantages of the opportunities offered him. Headlong and headstrong, always impatient of advice or control, Houston had too much of the actor in him, not to be assimilative, and it was not long before he caught the statesman's air. Putting aside his mannerism and eccentricities, although without diminution of his Homeric quality, he followed the debates as if they had been lessons, studying the masters with all the fidelity of an industrious pupil. Keen-minded, forceful and a born orator, he might have made a record for himself, but when stormy Andrew Jackson took possession of the national stage, a hero surrounded by villains, Houston gave heart and soul to the cause of his beloved chieftain.



© Underwood & Underwood.

ANDREW JACKSON

Sam Houston

When the electoral votes were counted after the presidential campaign of 1824, Old Hickory had 99 votes, John Quincy Adams, 84, W. H. Crawford, 41 and Henry Clay, 37. As there was not an absolute majority, the election went to the House of Representatives where Clay threw his strength to Adams. As Adams's first act was to make Clay his Secretary of State, straightway the cry arose that there had been a corrupt bargain between the two, and passionate Houston credited the charge without reservation. Convinced that Jackson had been the victim of a foul conspiracy, he became the bitterest of Old Hickory's partizans, devoting himself to attack and defense.

Out of the hatreds of the time came Sam Houston's first and only duel. A dispute, connected with the Nashville postmastership, led to a meeting with General William White, and on September 23, 1826, the two men faced each other at dawn in Simpson county, Kentucky, just across the Tennessee line, and not many miles from the spot where Andrew Jackson had killed Edward Dickinson twenty years before. Old Hickory, keenly anxious as to the outcome, gave Houston the full benefit of his own experience, and his last words were a caution to keep a bullet between his teeth. "You'll find that the bite steadies your aim," he said.

White, missing his shot, fell to the ground with a ball through his hip, a wound that was thought to be mortal. The Kentucky authorities returned an indict-

Sam Houston

ment against Houston, but the Governor of Tennessee refused to honor the requisition, and there the matter dropped. The indictment, as a matter of fact, was no more than a gesture, for dueling was legitimized by public opinion, being accepted as the one honorable method of settling disputes between gentlemen. As a result of his experience, however, Houston came to a horror of dueling, and there is no finer proof of character than his decision not to fight again except for his country. A bitter tongue and the high feeling of political campaigns brought him many challenges in the course of a long life, but either he assumed his loftiest tone and most Roman manner, or else he turned them off with a laugh.

"I never fight down-hill," was his answer to a despised political opponent in Texas. And at another time, when challenged, he said in a tone of deepest injury, "Why, I thought you were a friend of mine! And if a man can't abuse his friends, who in the hell can he abuse?" No other could have pursued such a course, but with Horseshoe Bend and San Jacinto behind him, there was no question as to his courage, and public sentiment pardoned him, even if it did not approve.

With Jackson again a candidate for the presidency, it became necessary to have true friends on guard in Tennessee, and as a consequence, Houston gave up the certainty of a third term in Congress and entered the race for governor in 1827. In a way it must have

Sam Houston

been a relief, for he was now able to lay aside ~~the~~ garb and manner compelled by Washington, and let loose his innate theatricalism. His meetings, according to contemporary report, were as thrilling as dramatic performances, and as for costume, this is a description that has come down to us:

He wore a tall, bell-crowned medium-brimmed, shining black beaver hat, shining black patent-leather military stock or cravat, incased by a standing collar, ruffled shirt, black satin vest, shining black silk pants gathered to the waistband with legs full, same size from seat to ankle, and a gorgeous, red-ground, many-colored gown or Indian hunting-shirt, fastened at the waist by a huge red sash covered with fancy beadwork, with an immense silver buckle, embroidered silk stockings, and pumps with large silver buckles. Mounted on a superb dapple-gray horse he appeared at the election unannounced, and was the observed of all observers.

Houston's majority was 12,000, and as in the case of his congressional service, he showed sober common sense, good judgment and high purpose when confronted with the responsibilities of office. Governor of the state to which he had come as a ragged, poverty-stricken boy, adored by his people and beloved by Andrew Jackson, that great figure who dominated the times like a Colossus, he must have remembered his years with the Cherokees as something remote and unreal as the happening of a dream.

Sam Houston

In January of 1828, he went down the Mississippi to the anniversary of the battle of New Orleans, Old Hickory's honored guest; and when Jackson won the presidency that same year, Sam Houston had the right to feel that even as he had come far in thirty-five years, so would he go still farther.

In January, 1829, he married Miss Eliza Allen, a young and beautiful girl, and it was as a bridegroom that he announced his candidacy for reelection. Despite powerful opposition, the campaign was beginning to assume every appearance of certain success, when in April his wife suddenly left the executive mansion, returning to her parents, and on the heels of this sensation Governor Houston handed in his resignation to the Secretary of State. No reason was assigned, the letter simply stating that "although shielded by perfect consciousness of undiminished claim to the confidence and support of my fellow citizens, and delicately circumstanced as I am, and by my own misfortunes more than the fault or contrivance of anyone, overwhelmed by sudden calamities, it is certainly due to myself and more respectfully to the world, that I retire from a position which, in the public judgment, I might seem to occupy by questionable authority."

Political enemies, quick to take advantage of his silence, invented the vilest calumnies, painting the young bride as one who had been driven into flight by abominable cruelties, and popular opinion flamed

Sam Houston

to a point where Houston was actually threatened by mob violence. Yet no word came from his tight-locked lips, and only once, in a private letter to a friend, did he ever make mention of the cause. "Eliza stands acquitted by me," he wrote. "I have received her as a virtuous, chaste wife, and as such I pray God I may ever regard her, and I trust I ever shall. She was cold to me and I thought did not love me." Even in the years of degradation that followed, when drunkenness became his habitual state, he held to the same iron silence, flaring into a deadly rage if anyone presumed to make the matter a subject of discussion.

At a later day, when the wife procured a divorce and married again, the truth came out. She had been forced into the union by her ambitious parents, although they knew she loved another, and she had gone to the altar an unhappy and unwilling bride. To one of her culture, the primitive Houston must have seemed a barbarian, and to lack of affection was soon added an overwhelming distaste. Ignorant of the emotional processes of women, and blinded by his own superb self-confidence, the groom saw nothing in the first weeks of the honeymoon, but as the young wife shrank more and more from the intimacies of wedded life, the truth was forced upon him.

It was a revelation that would have proved a tragedy to any man, but doubly was it tragic to one of Sam Houston's intense nature and overweening vanity, for not only was there heart-break but also

Sam Houston

humiliation. Any study of the facts in the case shows that he could have laid the story before the people in full confidence of the popular verdict, but pride and chivalry combined to bar him from such a course. To make public admission that he, the great Sam Houston, had been scorned and flouted, was unthinkable, for worse than laughter was the thought that he might be pitied.

Another and nobler cause also had part in the decision. One of Houston's most marked characteristics was a deep and almost childlike reverence for women. To him they were superior beings, and what wrongs and injustices they inflicted were to be borne by men without reply or reprisal. Any other course of conduct stamped a man as a scoundrel and a black-guard. Not for him to drag his bride through a divorce court, with its shabby business of charge and counter-charge, its public gossip and invitation to obscene surmise. Better the decency and dignity of oblivion, even though it meant the end of hope, the death of ambition.

These were the feelings that impelled him to send in his resignation as governor, and not content with the surrender of his honors, he now resolved upon exile. Out of a very completeness of ruin, a majesty of disaster, he might be able to retain some rags of self-respect to wrap about his naked vanity. But where could he go? Into his despair, like a ray of light, shot the memory of the Indians that had loved

Sam Houston

and sheltered him in the days of his wild youth. They would receive him without curiosity or question, and in their wigwams he could find a refuge if not forgetfulness. Not even acquainting friends with his decision, he walked out of the home that had become hateful, and faced toward the setting sun to seek sanctuary among the Cherokees.

A gesture, to be sure, and one that modern practicality may well regard as foolish and theatric, but how superb in its repudiation of shabby compromise, how magnificent in its barbaric disregard of consequences! And if he was "play acting," as his enemies loved to sneer, at least he held to his part, for not shame nor misery ever had power to wring a regret from his lips, a whine or a cry of self-pity.

An interesting side-light on Houston's flight is found in the reminiscences of Dr. Rufus Burleson, his friend and pastor. Shortly after "Old San Jacinto's" conversion and baptism years later, the worthy minister reproached him for his superstitions, particularly his faith in the augury of birds, and Houston confided this incident to him by way of explanation:

"When I was going into exile, I took the steamboat at Nashville bound for New Orleans. The boat was delayed at the different landings, taking on freights, and the brothers of Mrs. Houston, riding across country, overtook us at Clarksville, Tennessee. . . . They came aboard, greatly excited and heavily armed, and said: 'Governor Houston, the manner in which

Sam Houston

you have left Nashville has filled the city with a thousand wild rumors, among others, that you are goaded to madness and exile by having detected our sister in crime. We demand that you give a written denial of this, or else go back and prove it.'

"I replied: 'I will neither go back nor write a retraction, but in the presence of the captain and these well-known gentlemen, I request you to go back and publish in the Nashville papers that if any wretch dares to utter a word against the purity of Mrs. Houston, I will return and write the libel in his heart's blood.'

"That evening, as I was walking the upper deck of the boat, reflecting on the bitter disappointment I had caused General Jackson and all of my friends, and especially the blight and ruin of a pure and innocent woman who had trusted her whole happiness to me, I was in an agony of despair, and strongly tempted to leap overboard and end my worthless life. At that moment, however, an eagle swooped down near my head, and then, soaring aloft with wildest screams; was lost in the rays of the setting sun. I knew then that a great destiny waited for me in the West."

[IV]

CO-LON-NEH THE ROVER

ALTHOUGH the Southern states did not bring about the complete dispossession of the Cherokees until 1838, various sections of the tribe were driven out long before this time, and among those forced to seek new homes beyond the Mississippi were Houston's friends. They had pitched their tents where the Illinois River flows into the Arkansas, about thirty miles below Fort Gibson, and after many bitter and bloody quarrels with the Osages, were at peace. Oo-loo-tee-kah, now the head chief, had kept in touch with Houston throughout the separating years, and the wanderer was not in doubt of his welcome.

Refusing the company of friends, and slipping away from Nashville at night, the self-proscribed man set out on his long journey. Down the Cumberland, down the Mississippi to the mouth of the Arkansas, up that stream to Little Rock, and then by land and water, he came at last to the Indian village where Oo-loo-tee-kah waited for him with open arms. He had received word of Houston's coming, and the

Sam Houston

gigantic chieftain, in full vigor despite his sixty-five years, took the exile to his breast as though he had been a son.

"Eleven winters have passed since we met," he said, "and I heard you were a great chief among your people. I have heard that a dark cloud had fallen on the white path you were walking, and when it fell in your way, you turned your thoughts to me. My wigwam is yours, my people are yours, rest with us."

Although the wanderer asked nothing but a shelter, old Oo-loo-tee-kah, or John Jolly, as the whites knew him, insisted that every right of citizenship should be conferred, and the following instrument proves the delicacy of feeling with which he ignored Houston's unhappy circumstances: "In consideration of his former acquaintance with and services rendered to the Indians, and his present disposition to improve their conditions and benefit their circumstances, and our confidence in his integrity and talents, if he should remain among us—we as a committee appointed by order of the principal chief, John Jolly, do solemnly, firmly, and irrevocably grant to him forever all the rights, privileges and immunities of a citizen of the Cherokee nation."

Taking again the name of Co-lon-neh the Rover, the one given him when he lived with the Cherokees in Tennessee, Houston draped a blanket about his shoulders, and turned his back upon civilization with

Sam Houston

the conviction that it was forever. Every circumstance of his life among the Indians proved the truth of his assertion that he had no thought but to forget and be forgotten. To such of his friends as wrote, he returned no answer, and even American traders and army officers were avoided by him.

In Tennessee, Houston had not been remarkable for his sobriety, frequently indulging in the wild spree that were the fashion of the day. Now, however, with melancholy and despair resting heavy on him, he took to drink as a business, and it became a common sight to see his tall form sprawled in the streets of Fort Gibson or stretched soddenly in some forest path. Oo-loo-tee-kah grieved, but even when drunkest, Houston held to the majestic mien that discouraged liberties and advice.

In time he came to live with Tallahina, a majestic half-breed as tall as himself, marrying her in accordance with Cherokee law, and her care of him was true and tender. Houston ever held her in regard and gratitude, and when in Texas, and at a time when a career was opening to him, begged the squaw to come to him and take her place as his wife. She refused, not caring to leave her own people for a new life among strangers, but until she died Houston did not feel that he was free to consider another marriage.

With drink as his one escape from unhappy memories, the wretched man seemed doomed to sordid ob-

Sam Houston

scurity until such time as death should come to his relief, but the increasing misery of the Cherokees at last aroused him from his degradation. Love for the Indian was one of Sam Houston's disinterested passions, and the injustices worked upon the helpless savages ever had power to arouse his anger and indignation. Throughout his public life, as President of Texas and as United States Senator, he never lacked the courage and conscience to make protest against the dishonor, greed and cruelty that marked the conduct of the government in its dealings with aborigines. Even the abolitionists, so frenzied in their sympathy for the enslaved Negro, refused to lift their voices in a plea for the red man, and sat idle while he was degraded below the level of the black.

At a time when the "Indian ring" was at the height of its evil power, and when the people themselves were acquiescing in, if not actually approving the work of spoliation and oppression, Houston delivered this assertion of faith:

"I care not what dreamers and politicians and travelers and writers say to the contrary, I know the Indian character, and I confidentially avow, that if ~~one-third~~ of the many millions of dollars our government has appropriated within the last twenty-five years for the benefit of the Indian population had been honestly and judiciously applied, there would not have been, at this time, a single tribe within the limits of our States and Territories, but what would have been

Sam Houston

in the complete enjoyment of all the arts and all the comforts of civilized life. But there is not a tribe but has been outraged and defrauded; and nearly all the wars we have prosecuted against the Indians have grown out of the bold frauds and the cruel injustice played off upon them by our Indian agents and their accomplices."

Strangely enough, John C. Calhoun, his bitter enemy, was the only other man with sufficient vision and humanity to see the problem of the Indian as Houston saw it. In 1818, while Secretary of War, Calhoun wrote a report in which he painted the sad results of an Indian policy that enforced a "state of complete subjugation" even while nominally granting independence. "The consequence," he said, "is inevitable. They lose the lofty spirit and heroic courage of the savage state, without acquiring the virtues which belong to the civilized. Depressed in spirit and debauched in morals, they dwindle away through a wretched existence, a nuisance to the surrounding country."

Asserting the wisdom and necessity of better treatment, Calhoun took a firm stand in favor of Indian education, declaring that investigation proved that the progress of Indian children "appears to be quite equal to that of white children of the same age, and they appear to be equally susceptible of acquiring habits of industry. With these indications, it would seem that there is little hazard in pronouncing that, with

Sam Houston

proper and vigorous efforts, they may receive an education equal to that of the laboring portion of the community."

The plight of the Cherokees was particularly desperate at the time Oo-loo-tee-kah begged Houston's aid. In return for lands on the Lower Arkansas that had been surrendered, the Indians had been promised \$28 per capita, but when the time came for settlement, the government agents refused to pay them in cash, and merely issued certificates. Accomplices then purchased these certificates for a trifling sum or for some cheap bauble, assuring the credulous savages that they were valueless. Moreover, these agents tricked the poor Cherokees in a variety of other ways, cheating and plundering them in the matter of supplies and rations. Then, not content with plunging them into poverty, they sank them into degradation by the sale of whisky.

Roused from his brooding melancholy by the misery of his friends, and stirred to action by Oo-loo-tee-kah's pleas, Houston put away his drunkenness and promised to lead a delegation of Cherokees to Washington. It was a bitter pledge to make, for it meant new and deeper humiliations. He knew that his mode of life was well known to the outside world, thanks to the gossip of travelers, and not only would there be pity for the failure but also contempt for the drunkard. Such, however, was his devotion to the Indians that he did not falter, and pulling himself together as well

Sam Houston

as might be, Houston took the Cherokees on their long journey to Washington.

It must have been an affecting meeting between Houston and Old Hickory, the one now President and the idol of his people, the other an exile and a despised "squaw-man," but Andrew Jackson quickly proved that he had lost none of his regard for the former subaltern. Houston's report on Indian conditions was heard and believed, and "Old Hickory's" own hatred of injustice did the rest.

Before the "Indian ring" knew that a blow impended, five rascally agents were discharged, and the heads of the bureau informed that radical changes must be inaugurated. Out of his desire for Houston's reestablishment, as well as his wish to guarantee the Indians fairer treatment, the President now urged the exile to try for the contract to supply rations to the Cherokees. Houston finally agreed, a wealthy New Yorker consented to furnish the capital, and the bid put in was for eighteen cents a day per head.

The "Indian ring," however, had both financial and political power, for many men in high place were unknown beneficiaries of the well-organized thievery, and Houston's action gave the secret scoundrels a chance for attack. Straightway the cry arose that he stood to make millions if awarded the contract, and congressmen loudly denounced his bid as a shame and a scandal. The head clerk of the Indian Bureau, one of those who had been accused by Houston, declared

Sam Houston

seven cents a day per capita a fair price, and swore that other contractors had experienced no difficulty in making money at that figure.

Most certainly they had made money at that figure, for the rations supplied were not only of the poorest quality, much of it condemned stuff, but even this rotten food was not provided in sufficient quantity. It was a matter of record that many Indians actually died of starvation. Houston's bid was high because he planned to furnish nourishing food, and to distribute the rations at the Indian villages instead of compelling the savages to travel hundreds of miles.

Whatever Sam Houston's faults, greed was not one of them. Money meant nothing to him, and the proof of this is furnished by the fact that he lived a poor man, and died in such poverty that Texas had to educate his children. The graft charges stung him as nothing else could have done, and what added to his injury was President Jackson's inclusion in the alleged 'scandal.' Old Hickory himself was all for plunging forward, proposing to make an example of the "rascals," but Houston, realizing that the administration would be hurt by such a course, insisted upon withdrawing, and there the matter ended for the moment.

Bitter and despondent, the exile now set out upon his return to Arkansas, and that he might see his mother, journeyed by way of Tennessee. Doubtless his sensitive spirit shrank from the ordeal, but the

Sam Houston

receptions accorded him by the people must have been balm to his sore heart. There was now some understanding of his chivalric course, and as if to atone for past injustice, the Tennesseans greeted him with open arms, and begged him to take his place among them once again. He would not have it so, however, for his proud spirit was still too bruised, and after affecting farewells, he turned again to the west, and came once more to the wigwam where waited Tallahina.

In an effort to rescue himself from the degradation into which he felt himself falling, Houston had established a small trading post between the Verdigris and the Grand, a short distance from Fort Gibson. It was never much of a success because of his deep-rooted distaste for barter, together with his intemperate habits, nor were matters improved by his painful Washington experience. Now fully convinced that he was a man without hope, an Ishmael, a vast melancholy took complete possession of his heart and soul, and more than ever he sought forgetfulness in drink.

Time, however, soon proved that the Indian ring had not been crushed or cowed, for after a discreet interval, the old thieveries were resumed with even greater vigor. Again the Cherokees knew oppression and starvation, and again old Oo-loo-tee-kah begged Houston's aid. The Big Drunk, for so the exile had come to be called, refused at first, for he dreaded a return to Washington and its scandalmongers, but

Sam Houston

his determination was not proof against the chieftain's entreaties. Never did he make a more important decision, for it was the happenings of this second visit that changed the whole course of his life, giving him the new opportunities for which he had ceased to hope.

[V]

CANING A CONGRESSMAN

IT WAS a turbulent, hate-filled Washington to which Sam Houston returned in the spring months of 1832. Andrew Jackson, easily the best-loved man of his day, was also the best-hated, for not only were his judgments fierce and implacable, but his policies were in the interests of the great mass of plain people, and struck straight at the long-standing rule of the privileged few. He had just announced his intention to destroy the United States Bank, the source and center of oligarchic power, and the wrath of his enemies mounted close to mania. By way of adding to turmoil, there were bitter Cabinet dissensions, for the famous "Eaton scandal" was dividing Jackson's official family into warring groups.

Peggy O'Neal, the daughter of a Washington tavern keeper, had married Major John H. Eaton, Jackson's Secretary of War and one of the President's closest friends. A lively, harum-scarum girl, there had always been a certain amount of gossip about the fascinating Peggy, and when she became Eaton's wife, the anti-administration forces leaped at the chance for

Sam Houston

mud-slinging. Every one of Peggy's indiscretions was transformed into an immoral act, charges were made openly that she had sustained adulterous relations with Major Eaton prior to the marriage, and the word went forth that she was to be excluded from Washington society.

It was not only that the President loved John Eaton. There was the added fact that he too had suffered from similar vilenesses of gossip. He had married dark-eyed Rachel Donelson, everybody believing that she had won her divorce, but after two years it developed that the blackguardly husband had purposely failed to complete the Virginia proceedings, sending a false report to Tennessee. A remarriage became necessary, and it was this tragic circumstance that figured in every one of Jackson's campaigns. He believed, and with good ground, that it was these calumnies that broke the heart of gentle Rachel, sending her to the grave on the very eve of her husband's inauguration.

These memories, joined with his passionate loyalty where friendship was concerned, stirred Old Hickory to the depths of his soul, and with all the fierce impetuosity of his nature, he made Peggy's cause his own. Months were devoted to the establishment of her innocence, and no political or personal consideration stood in the way of his fight to end her social ostracism. It was a battle that decided a presidency. Mrs. Calhoun, as the recognized leader of Washington

Sam Houston

society, refused to abate her antagonism to Peggy, and when the Vice-President took a position in support of his wife, Jackson's anger knew no bounds.

Martin Van Buren, however, the suave, adroit Secretary of State, happened to be a bachelor, and lacking Calhoun's handicap of a strong-minded wife, lost no opportunity to pay Mrs. Eaton due deference and every social attention. Other causes came to increase Jackson's hatred of Calhoun, but the chief reason that impelled him to give his powerful support to Van Buren in 1836 was his championship of Peggy Eaton.

It was when the rage of the President's enemies was at its highest that Sam Houston arrived upon the scene. Poor John Eaton, worn out with the humiliating struggle, had just resigned as Secretary of War, having succeeded in getting Jackson to transfer him to the governorship of Florida, and Houston's arrival, on the very heels of Eaton's resignation, suggested new possibilities of attack. One William Stanberry, a member of Congress from Ohio, delivered a savage assault on the administration, and in the course of his speech, asked: "Was not the late Secretary of War removed because of his attempt fraudulently to give to Governor Houston the contract for Indian rations?"

No sooner had the speech appeared in the *National Intelligencer* than Houston dispatched a note to Stanberry by his friend Cave Johnson demanding to know whether the paper had quoted him correctly. The answer, addressed to Johnson, was a curt refusal to

Sam Houston

give any information whatsoever, and joined to this was some sneering reference to Houston as one too insignificant for a congressman's notice. This blow at his vanity was almost as atrocious as the attack upon his honor, and ended hope of any amicable adjustment of the matter.

"So he doesn't know me," gritted Houston when Johnson showed him the letter. "Then I will introduce myself to the damned rascal." Despite the counsel of friends, he made public announcement of his intention to thrash Stanberry within an inch of his life.

Stanberry, duly informed of the threat, proceeded to arm himself, but Houston laughingly refused the offer of a pistol, and merely took firmer grasp upon a stout hickory cane that he carried. He made no attempt to find his enemy, however, preferring that the meeting should be accidental, and it was not until ten days after the correspondence that the two men came face to face. Houston had dined with Senator Alexander Buckner of Missouri, and the two were walking down Pennsylvania Avenue when Stanberry happened to come abreast.

"Are you Mr. Stanberry?" asked Houston, and when the Ohio congressman answered in the affirmative, Houston shouted, "Then you are a damned scoundrel," and catching the squirming congressman by the collar, proceeded to give him the caning that had been promised.

Sam Houston

It has become much the custom for historians to brand the encounter as a brutal, atrocious assault, "barbarous and ruffianly" in every respect, but the fact remains that not only was Stanberry a man as powerful as Houston, but he had the added advantage of being armed. Almost with the striking of the first blow, he drew his pistol and pulled the trigger when the barrel was pressed against Houston's heart. The weapon missed fire, however, and wrenching it from Stanberry's hand, Houston calmly went on with his caning, only halting when the agonized legislator broke down and whimpered.

Great was the stir that followed, for the very next morning, Stanberry addressed this note to the Speaker of the House: "I was waylaid on the street, near to my boarding-house, last night about eight o'clock, and attacked, knocked down by a bludgeon, and severely bruised and wounded by Samuel Houston, late of Tennessee, for words spoken in my place in the House of Representatives, by reason of which I am confined to my bed, and unable to discharge my duties in the House, and attend to the interests of my constituents. I communicate this information to you, and request that you will lay it before the House."

A resolution was offered, calling for Houston's arrest and punishment, and at once the Jackson forces rushed to the defense. Old Hickory himself openly rejoiced, declaring with many chuckles "after a few more examples of the same kind, members of

Sam Houston

Congress will learn to keep civil tongues in their heads." Whereupon the President's enemies seized on the remark as fresh evidence of his bloodthirstiness, and even went so far as to spread the story that Jackson had instigated the assault.

James K. Polk, a member of Congress from Tennessee, who was even then cocking an eye at the presidency, led the fight against the resolution, and only after a month of debate was it carried. Houston, arrested and brought before the Bar of the House on April 16, was represented by Francis Scott Key, author of "The Star-Spangled Banner," although the prisoner virtually handled his own case throughout the trial.

Another month was spent in bitterness and hate, the anti-Jackson forces contending that Houston had lain in wait, like an assassin, to strike down his foe, and the Jackson phalanx answering that Houston had acted as a man of honor and courage, pitting a cane against a deadly weapon. In opening the defense, Houston declared that "if, when deeply wronged, I have followed the generous impulses of my heart, have violated the laws of my country and the privileges of this honorable body, I am willing to be held to my responsibility for so doing." It was his insistence, however, that there was no breach of the privileges of the House, because a member forfeited these privileges "when he brands a private citizen as a fraudulent

Sam Houston

villain in the face of the whole world, and renders himself answerable to the party aggrieved."

His closing speech was much in the manner of Pope's Iliad, grandiloquent to the last degree, but the sonorous phrases fitted in with Houston's majestic presence, while his deep organ voice, tremulous with feeling, gave the address an effect of passionate sincerity. Speaking to the charge that he was "a man of ruined fortune and blasted reputation," he finished with this truly affecting reply: "Though the ploughshare of ruin has been driven over me, and laid waste my brightest hopes, yet I am proud to think that under all circumstances I have endeavored to maintain the laws of my country, and to support her institutions. Whatever may be the opinion of gentlemen in relation to these matters, I am here to be tried for a substantive offense, disconnected entirely with my former life or circumstances. I have only to say to those who rebuke me at this time, when they see my adversity sorely pressing upon me, for myself:

'I ask no sympathies, nor need;

The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted. They have torn me, and I bleed.'"

After long and impassioned debate, Houston was found guilty by a vote of 106 to 89, and sentenced to be reprimanded, but the Speaker of the House, a Jackson supporter, administered the reprimand in such a manner that it became approval, merely saying:

Sam Houston

“Whatever the motives and causes may have been which led to this act of violence committed by you, your conduct has been pronounced by a solemn judgment of the House to be a high breach of their rights and privileges, and to demand their marked disapprobation and censure . . . and in obedience to the order of the House I reprimand you accordingly.”

There was also an effort to have him deprived of his right to the floor of the House, a privilege to which he was entitled both as an ex-member and an ex-governor, but this was defeated by a vote of 101 to 90. In the meantime, Houston had been indicted for assault and battery, and bound over under \$20,000 bail. Tried before a court of the District of Columbia, he was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine of \$500, but President Jackson calmly proceeded to remit the fine for “divers good and sufficient reasons,” regardless of the clamor of the opposition.

The deck thus cleared, Houston now took the offensive, and demanded an investigation of the charges that had been made in connection with his bid for the Indian contract. Moreover, he insisted that Stanberry himself should be a member of the committee. The investigation was duly held, and although his enemies spared no pains to present evidence to his discredit the final report vindicated Houston in every particular.

Years later, in discussing the Stanberry incident, Houston said: “Had they taken me before a justice of the peace and fined me ten dollars for assault and

Sam Houston

battery, it would have killed me; but they gave me a national tribunal for a theater, and set me up again." At the time, however, Houston saw neither humor nor advantage in the happening, and his only emotions were of rage and resentment.

During the Washington stay, there can be no question that many conversations took place between Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston regarding the latter's future, for the loyal, warm-hearted President had never reconciled himself to the self-imposed exile of his friend. Undoubtedly there were offers of official place, but Houston, appreciating that the acceptance of any honor would simply mean another fierce attack upon the administration, steadfastly refused. What he did accept, however, was a commission to go to Texas for the purpose of persuading the savage Comanches to quit their raids across the American border. Some peace treaty was imperatively necessary, and Jackson, knowing Houston's influence with every Indian tribe, begged his aid as a personal favor.

Returning to the Cherokees to put his affairs in order, Houston announced his purpose to go to Texas, and at once old lies were revived and new ones invented. The dramatic nature of his retirement as Governor of Tennessee, together with the lack of any explanation, had caused a variety of conjecture, and many extravagant tales were put in circulation. A favorite story was that he had gone to the Indians to enlist their support in a campaign for the conquest

Sam Houston

of Texas, and that he planned a great western empire such as Aaron Burr had dreamed.

In 1829, just as Houston was leaving Nashville for the Arkansas Territory, President Jackson had instructed Joel Poinsett, our minister in Mexico, to make an offer for the purchase of Texas. This fact, coupled with Old Hickory's well-known fondness for Houston, straightway led many Whig papers and politicians to hint that Jackson himself was Houston's secret backer in his scheme to revive Burr's ambitious project.

These rumors had died down, but news of the Texas journey gave them fresh life, and fertile imaginations lost little time in adding to them. A certain Dr. Robert Mayo, one of the vast army of office-seekers that infested Washington, gained much notoriety by disclosure of a most sinister plot. According to Mayo, he had lived with Houston in the same Washington boarding-house in 1830, and had been approached repeatedly for his support of a huge and far-flung plan for the conquest of Texas.

"I learned from him," stated Mayo, "that he was organizing an expedition against Texas, to afford a cloak to which he had assumed the Indian costume, habits and associations, by settling among them in the neighborhood of Texas. That nothing was more easy to accomplish than the conquest and possession of that extensive and fertile country, by the cooperation of the Indians in the Arkansas Territory, and recruits among the citizens of the United States. That in his

Sam Houston

view it would hardly be necessary to strike a blow to wrest Texas from Mexico. That it was ample for the establishment and maintenance of a separate and independent government from the United States. That the expedition would be got ready with all possible dispatch, that the demonstration would and must be made in about twelve months from that time. That the event of success opened the most boundless prospects of success to those who would embark in it."

The imaginative Mayo also asserted that he had met a Mr. Hunter, the recruiting agent for the expedition, and that Hunter told him that "there were agencies established in all the principal towns; that several thousands had already enlisted along the seaboard, from New England to Georgia inclusive; that every man paid thirty dollars to the common fund, and took oath of secrecy and good faith to the cause on joining the party; that they were to repair, in their individual capacities as travelers, to different points on the banks of the Mississippi, where they had already chartered steamboats on which to embark, and thence fly to their rendezvous, somewhere in the territory of Arkansas or Texas convenient for action."

More downright balderdash was never contained in any one narrative. The circumstances surrounding Houston's flight from Tennessee carry ample refutation of the fanciful theory that he resigned at Jackson's request, and the record shows plainly that he did not proceed to Texas immediately, but remained with

Sam Houston

the Cherokees until 1832. Moreover, when he learned that he was being credited with a design to make himself "Emperor of the Rio Grande," he took time to write to President Jackson from Little Rock, specifically denying the published reports, and assuring his friend that he had no purpose but to win oblivion. Jackson's letter in reply completes the disproof that he had knowledge of Houston's intention to resign or any sympathy with a plan for the conquest of Texas:

It has been communicated to me that you had the illegal enterprise in view of conquering Texas; that you had declared that you would, in less than two years, be emperor of that country by conquest. I must really have thought you deranged to have believed you had so wild a scheme in contemplation; and, particularly, when it was communicated that the physical force to be employed was the Cherokee Indians! Indeed, my dear sir, I cannot believe you have any such chimerical, visionary scheme in view. Your pledge of honor to the contrary is a sufficient guarantee that you will never engage in any enterprise injurious to your country, or that would tarnish your fame. . . . My affliction was great and as much as I could well bear, when I parted from you on the 18th of January last. I then viewed you as on the brink of happiness and rejoiced. About to be united in marriage to a beautiful young lady, of accomplished manners and of respectable connections, and of your own selection,—you, the Governor of the State and holding the affections of

Sam Houston

the people; these were your prospects when I shook you by the hand and bade you farewell! You can well judge my astonishment and grief in receiving a letter from you, dated at Little Rock, A. T., conveying the sad intelligence that you were then a private citizen, an exile from your country. What a reverse of fortune! How unstable are human affairs!

The correspondence between Jackson and Houston, given in a later chapter, proves that the business with the Indians was Houston's one errand, and when he left for Texas in December, instead of being attended by a great company of filibusters, well-armed and fully equipped, he was accompanied only by two friends, and these rode but a part of the way. As for money, he had none, and his mount was a wretched mustang so small that Houston's long legs touched the ground. His sorry appearance rubbed his vanity raw, and when the time came to part with his companions, he exclaimed:

"This damned bobtailed pony is a disgrace. He is continually fighting the flies, and has no means of protecting himself, and his kicks and contortions render his rider ridiculous. I shall be the laughter of all Mexico. I require a steed with his natural weapon, a flowing tail, that he may defend himself against his enemies as his master has done. Harris, you *must* trade."

Generously enough, Harris did trade, and with a big

Sam Houston

long-tailed horse beneath him, Houston rode off alone into the wilderness. All of his correspondence proves that he had full expectation of returning to Tallahina and his wigwam. The future was veiled for him, and he had no vision of the glory that awaited.

[VI]

THE STORY OF TEXAS

CORTEZ, conquering Mexico, laid claim to the whole of the vast southern stretch, but the Great Captain, concerned only with gold and silver, paid small attention to the arid wastes beyond the Rio Grande. Not until 1540, when Coronado rode through on his hunt for the Seven Cities of Cibola, where precious metals littered the ground, did Spanish foot touch Texas soil, and even then it was not for long. The fabled cities turned out to be mere huddles of Zúñi huts, the plains Indians attacked both night and day, hunger and thirst tormented, and it was only a remnant of the expedition that reached Mexico to meet derision and disgrace.

The glory of settlement, or, at least, the credit for the first attempt to conquer hostile prairies, was left to a Frenchman, René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, at once the bravest and most ill-starred of all his gallant breed. It was in 1682 that he followed the Mississippi from its upper waters to the mouth, and took possession of the territory, naming it Louisiana

Sam Houston

in honor of the Grand Monarch. Returning three years later with intent to establish colonies, he missed his route and entered Matagorda Bay. Virtually marooned in the Texas desert, for his one boat was wrecked, La Salle made two heroic dashes in the hope of reaching Canada by land, but on the second, after contending indomitably against disastrous fortune, fell by the bullets of his own treacherous followers.

The King of Spain, hearing of La Salle's explorations, decided upon the assertion of his own claim to Texas, and in 1689 a force of soldiers set out from Mexico. Missions and military posts were set up here and there, but they languished from the start and were soon abandoned. When French colonization threatened in 1714, soldiers and settlers were once more hurried across the Rio Grande, and this second time the Spaniards built on firmer foundations. The winding reaches of the river of San Antonio de Padua proved most attractive, and on one bank was laid out the royal presidio of San Antonio de Bexar, and on the other the Mission of San Antonio de Valero, a structure that was to become historic as the Alamo. Other missions followed—Mission de la Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, Mission San Francisco de la Espada, Mission San Juan Capistrano—and Texas seemed to have been conquered. Tlaxcalans were brought in, and some thirty families from the Canary Islands, but Indian attacks eventually broke even the spirit of the gaunt Franciscan fathers, and save for

Sam Houston

the settlement at Bexar, the inhospitable land was left to the sun and wind and roving red men.

The long struggle between France and Spain for the New World possessions ended in 1762, when Louis XV ceded Louisiana to the Spanish, and with Texas no longer threatened, the province was forgotten. In 1800, however, Spain handed Louisiana back to France by a secret treaty, and when Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase three years later, Texas was supposed to have been included in Napoleon's bill of sale. Spain angrily protested, refusing to give possession, and when Lieutenant Zebulon Pike was sent to explore the region west of the Mississippi, Spanish soldiers made him a prisoner. Even so, no effort was made to settle Texas, for the Spaniards thought it well to keep the desolate, Indian-scourged expanse as a barrier between their Mexican possessions and American territory.

In 1810, Miguel Hidalgo, a humble parish priest of Dolores, led the Mexican people in rebellion against the might of Spain, and one of his lieutenants, Bernardo Gutierrez, conceived the idea of seizing Texas. Aided by Augustus Magee, who resigned his commission in the United States Army, he led 450 American volunteers across the Sabine, and captured the small and scattered settlements. When the rebellion was crushed in Mexico, however, and poor Hidalgo and his lieutenants hanged, drawn and quartered, the royalist troops entered Texas in force. Aided by

Sam Houston

Indians, the Mexicans and Americans whipped the viceroy's army in the first encounter, but Gutierrez permitted the cold-blooded slaughter of fifteen prisoners, and many of the volunteers from the United States quit in disgust. A second battle resulted in another defeat for the royalist troops, but a third attempt crushed the rebels; and when General Arredondo marched into captured Bexar, it was indeed a bloody vengeance that he exacted. Soldiers and civilians alike were butchered, and men and women were packed so thick in prison cells that scores smothered.

Another priest, José Maria Morelos, more of a military genius than Hidalgo, rose to carry on the Mexican revolution; but his victories could not be consolidated, and he too was shot down, and his head hung high as a warning to the enemies of God and the king. It was one of Morelos's agents, Herrera, who entered Texas in 1816 after having gathered a troop of adventurers in New Orleans. He combined forces with Luis Aury, a South American patriot, and the two took possession of the island of Galveston, and set up a rebel government of sorts.

Even as the adventurers planned and wrangled, Xavier Mina arrived upon the scene, coming to the New World as a breath of romance from the Old. A Navarrese, he had fought bravely though vainly against the tyrannies of a Spanish king, and was now offering his sword to the cause of Mexican independence. With some three hundred followers, mostly

Sam Houston

Americans, he landed on the coast of Tamaulipas in 1817, and after winning victories against overwhelming odds, was deserted and betrayed by the Mexicans themselves, and met his death in front of a firing squad. Aury's expedition ended in equal disaster, and again Texas returned to her savage silences.

Now came another picturesque but totally different crew to take possession of vacant Galveston. Jean Lafitte and his pirates, driven out of Baratavia, landed on the island, and raising the black flag, sent word through the sea lanes that a new and safe headquarters had been found. Reckless adventurers came from all parts of the world, and with Spanish ships to capture, and African Negroes to sell, Galveston roared like the Dry Tortugas in the days of the great buccaneers.

In 1819, however, there was a new turn of the Texas wheel. While neither Jefferson, nor any succeeding President, had surrendered the contention that the Louisiana Purchase ran to the Rio Grande, no effort had been made to enforce title. Florida was the chief American concern, for it cut off the United States from the Gulf. In 1819, therefore, when Spain's need of money led her to consent to the sale of Florida, President Monroe threw in the American claim to Texas as part of the five-million-dollar purchase price, and the treaty fixed the Sabine River as the dividing line between Texas and United States territory. Straightway Spain made complaint that Lafitte and his buccaneers were Americans, where-

Sam Houston

upon a battle-ship proceeded to Galveston, and down came the Jolly Roger without resistance, the pirates scattering to the four corners of the earth.

The surrender of Texas was not liked by many Americans, Henry Clay leading the fight against the treaty, and dissatisfaction was translated into bold action by Dr. James Long, a tempestuous Tennessean who fought with Jackson at the battle of New Orleans. At the head of an army of seventy-five, he marched from Natchez to Nacogdoches, took the town and flamboyantly declared Texas a free and independent republic. After this there was a descent upon deserted Galveston, a sail down the coast, and brave preparations to attack San Antonio, but before the assault could be delivered, news came that Mexican independence had been won.

Where Hidalgo and Morelos had failed, a traitor succeeded. Don Augustin de Iturbide, notorious for his cruelties in suppressing the revolution, suddenly switched sides in 1821, and after seducing the army, led it against Apodaca, the Spanish viceroy, and forced his resignation. Despite the fact that it was Spain that Long had been fighting against, he was taken prisoner in Texas, and sent to the City of Mexico, where an assassin's bullet ended his crowded life.

It was in the midst of all this turmoil that Moses Austin, a Connecticut Yankee living in St. Louis, crossed the border in 1820 with a dream of colonization. As he explained to the Spanish authorities in

Sam Houston

San Antonio, if they would give the land grants, he would guarantee to bring in the settlers. As far as Mexico was concerned, Texas presented nothing but hopeless problems. Mexicans could not be induced to settle in its wilderness, the savage tribes were now raiding Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Tamaulipas, and it must have been with a sigh of relief that Apodaca, the king's viceroy, gave Austin a grant of land with permission to bring in three hundred families. The hardships of the long journey back to St. Louis cost the pioneer his life, and on his death-bed he passed the undertaking to his son.

Born in Virginia, November 3, 1793, educated in Connecticut and Kentucky, Stephen Austin was a practicing lawyer at twenty, and a member of the legislature of the Missouri Territory, and at twenty-three, a United States district judge for the Territory of Arkansas. These things he gave up to make his father's dream come true. By dint of advertising and personal solicitation, a certain number of colonists were secured, and Austin set out for Texas by land, sending a schooner to Matagorda Bay with supplies and agricultural implements. In keeping with the ill fortune that seemed to attend every attempt at settlement, the schooner went down in a gale, and thus robbed of the necessities upon which they had counted, Austin and his families found themselves facing the future with naked hands. Nor was it the only blow.

Apodaca was no longer viceroy, having been over-

Sam Houston

thrown by a union of the patriot forces under Iturbide, and Austin was called upon to travel twelve hundred burning miles to the City of Mexico for a new grant. Iturbide, now emperor, gave his approval, but his empire fell before the ink was dry, and harassed Austin had to secure a revalidation from the new government. The grant, as finally obtained, allowed 640 acres for each male colonist over twenty-one, 320 acres for a wife, 160 for each child, and 80 for each slave. The land selected by Austin was in the heart of the rich, rolling stretches between the Colorado and the Brazos, and on his return in 1823, he founded the capital of his colony and called it San Felipe de Austin.

Encouraged by Austin's example and Mexico's liberal colonization laws, other Americans applied for grants. In 1825 alone, Robert Leftwich obtained a contract for two hundred families; Hayden Edwards, one for eight hundred families; Green Dewitt, three hundred families, Martin de Leon for one hundred and fifty families and Ben R. Milam, one hundred and fifty. Austin himself received a grant for five hundred additional families. Moreover, many independent emigrants came to Texas at their own expense and took lands where it pleased them.

There was rare courage in the coming of these men and women, for the journey from the Mississippi had no easy spots. There were no roads, oftentimes not even a trail; swollen streams frequently necessitated the building of rafts, and lack of supplies sometimes

Sam Houston

compelled a stop until corn could be planted and harvested. Many colonists were two and three years on the way, and even after reaching Texas, their troubles were not over, for agricultural implements were few, and the Indians an ever-present menace. Serene and indomitable, however, the colonist drove his plow with one hand, holding his rifle in the other, and if crops failed, there were always game and wild horses.

All of the *impresarios* were able men, but Stephen Austin, well called the "father of Texas," was a great man, wise, just, unfaltering and far-seeing. Texas had been joined with Coahuila as a state in the Mexican Union, but government was a poor thing, and Austin himself created a code of laws, organized a militia for protection against the Indians, and was the real ruler of the colonies. The years 1827 and 1828 saw him obtain two additional grants for four hundred families, other *impresarios* entered the field, and slowly but surely, stubborn Texas yielded to the courage of the Anglo-Saxons.

The United States, first to recognize the independence of Mexico, sent Joel R. Poinsett to the City of Mexico as our minister, and among other instructions, he was ordered to make an offer for Texas if the Mexican government showed any willingness to sell. The intent of President John Quincy Adams, and Henry Clay, his Secretary of State, was not territorial expansion but border protection. The American frontier was being ravaged by the Texas Indians, and Mexico

Sam Houston

did nothing to restrain them. Poinsett was told to explain carefully that the offer stood as an independent transaction, being entirely separate from the treaty of 1819. Nothing could have been more open and aboveboard, for the United States had bought Louisiana from France, and Florida from Spain.

In Mexico, however, the bright promise of liberty was being clouded by domestic discord and every variety of treason. The Old Order, as the combination of wealth and privilege was known, hated the constitution and its pledge of popular government, and set deliberately to work to destroy it. Under the leadership of Lucas Alaman, a propaganda was initiated that painted the United States as a nation of heretics, a greedy Colossus, determined to steal Mexican territory either by "bribes" or by force, and slowly but surely the public mind was poisoned against a friendly neighbor.

Andrew Jackson, succeeding Adams in 1829, was equally convinced that the acquisition of Texas was the one way to assure border protection, and he instructed Poinsett to push the negotiations, authorizing an offer of \$5,000,000. Vicente Guerrero, Mexico's second president, a man of the people and an ardent democrat, did no more than listen to the proposal, but the Old Order, eager to be rid of him, screamed that he was Poinsett's tool, and charged that he planned to give away the blood-bought soil of the motherland. Guerrero dismissed Poinsett in an effort to abate the

Sam Houston

agitation, and his enemies straightway seized upon it as an evidence of weakness.

Money was freely used to seduce the army, and at a given signal the banner of revolt was raised by General Anastasio Bustamante. Guerrero, betrayed and deserted, was forced to flee for his life, (he was captured by treachery soon afterwards, and shot) and Bustamante, seizing executive power, appointed Alaman as his Secretary of Foreign Relations.

In full control, the Old Order at once began to destroy free institutions. A centralized tyranny now set aside the constitution of 1824, and popular outcry was crushed by shooting, hanging, imprisonment and exile. These measures failing to crush general protest, Alaman announced that the Texas colonists were in revolt, armed and financed by the United States, and all true Mexicans were exhorted to rally in defense of the nation's life and honor. It was his idea, and a clever one, that foreign war, or even the threat of it, would cause the people to lay aside their grievances and unite in defense of country.

Texas at the time, however, was the one peaceful state in the Mexican Union, and therefore Bustamante was compelled to take steps to arouse revolt. As a consequence, on April 6, 1830, a batch of harsh and intolerable decrees was issued. Further Anglo-Saxon emigration into Texas was forbidden, contracts were to be suspended, tariffs were to shut out the importation of supplies, and troops marching to Texas inaugu-

Sam Houston

rated a brutal reign of terror. Ports were closed, local authorities set aside, citizens blackmailed, and convict soldiers quartered in homes.

The unhappy colonists, too few for resistance, endured these brutal oppressions without attempt at resistance, realizing their weakness, but Stephen Austin knew their fiery natures, and addressed a warning to the government that might have saved Texas to Mexico had it been heeded: "I have informed you many times, and I inform you again, that it is impossible to rule Texas by a military system. . . . From the year 1821 I have maintained order and enforced the law in my colony simply by means of *civicos*, without a single soldier, and without a dollar of expense to the nation. . . . Upon this subject of military despotism I have never hesitated to express my opinion, for I consider it the source of all revolutions and of the slavery and ruin of free peoples."

These conditions persisted until 1832, when one Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna called upon the people of Mexico to take arms against the tyrannies of Bustamante. This ambitious creature, who was to prove his country's curse, had already betrayed Apodaca, Iturbide and Guerrero, even as he was now betraying Bustamante, but such were his high-sounding assurances that the people forgot his past. In a voice choked by deep feeling, he declared his love and reverence for the constitution of 1824, and pledged his life and sacred honor to restore it.

Sam Houston

The news of Santa Anna's revolution brought joy to Texas, for the colonists were all ardent federalists, and blamed their troubles entirely upon the centralists. A call to arms was sounded at once, and with Santa Anna and the constitution as a battle-cry, the Texans marched to war. The garrisons at Fort Velasco and Nacogdoches were attacked and captured after some brisk fighting, and on the arrival of General Mexia, Santa Anna's representative in the north, pledges of loyalty were offered and accepted.

With the country swept clean of Bustamante's soldiers, the colonists now called an elective assembly, and set to work preparing a petition for the redress of grievances. The repeal of the oppressive laws was asked, and particularly was their petition for separate statehood. The union with Coahuila had been most disastrous to Texas, for not only was the capital seven hundred miles away, but the colonists had been denied proper representation, and were the continual victims of brazen robberies. Upon deliberation, however, it was judged best to postpone the memorials until Santa Anna should take the presidential office.

This, then, was the Texas that Sam Houston found when he crossed the border in December, 1832.

[VII]

A NEW LIFE IN A NEW LAND

SAVE for the colonies, mere pin-pricks in the vast expanse of Texas, the country through which Sam Houston rode was as wild and solitary as when Coronado passed by on his vain hunt for the Seven Cities of Cibola. Yet there was majesty in the mighty stretches, and doubtless the lone rider thrilled to the challenge of the silent land that had defied conquest for three centuries.

On reaching San Antonio, Houston's explanation of his purpose gained him a cordial reception from the Mexican officials, and his royal port and thorough knowledge of Indian character soon enabled him to win the confidence of the Comanche chieftains. For several weeks he sat in their councils, matching oratory against oratory, conferring silver medals with his grandest air, and at the end secured their pledge to send delegates to Fort Gibson for the making of a treaty. His errand discharged, he returned to San Felipe for a visit with Stephen Austin, beginning a friendship that was to last until death.

Another man that he took to his heart was James

Sam Houston

Bowie, the famous fighter who was to die a hero's death in the Alamo. Although a native of Louisiana, Bowie had been a member of Long's ill-fated expedition in 1813, and thereafter had regarded himself as a Texan. Tall, strong and handsome, he had won the heart and hand of the lovely daughter of Vice-Governor Veramendi, head of a rich old Spanish family in San Antonio, and he no longer rode alligators for amusement as in the days of his reckless youth.

The terrible knife to which he gave his name was made from a blacksmith's file, broad and heavy, and although he had proved its efficiency in many hand-to-hand encounters, no man was more quiet and unassuming or less likely to be picked out as a "killer." Only the year before he had added to his fame by a bloody battle with the Indians while hunting gold in the San Saba country. One hundred and sixty-four savages surrounded him and seven companions out on the open prairie, but after a day and night of fighting, the Indians were whipped into flight, leaving eighty dead behind them.

In no community did Houston find himself a stranger, for the Texans were Southerners for the most part—men with the wild cavalier strain in their blood, who had left comfortable homes and promising careers out of a passion for adventure—and the exile was received as one of them. Remembering what Houston had been, the colonists urged him to quit the Cherokees and come into a new land where courage

Sam Houston

and resource earned rich rewards. He was deeply touched by these expressions of faith and friendship, but it was still the case that he had a task to discharge, and could promise no more than that he would return for a second and longer visit. Setting forth again, he crossed the border into Louisiana, and the following letter, addressed to the Indian commissioners at Fort Gibson, proves plainly the purpose for which he went to Texas:

*Natchitoches, Louisiana,
February, 13, 1833.*

GENTLEMEN:

It was my intention to have visited Fort Gibson, and to have reported to you my success, so far as it was connected with the Comanche Indians; but at this season, as I may expect a great rise in the waters, and the range for horses on the direct route is too scarce to afford subsistence, I will content myself with reporting to you the prospects, as they are presented to me, of a future peace. Since my report from Fort Towson, I proceeded through Texas as far as Bexar, where I had the good fortune to meet with some chiefs of that nation, who promised to visit the commissioners in three moons from that time. This will make it the month of April before they will be enabled to set out for Fort Gibson, and perhaps defer their arrival at that point until the month of May next.

I found them well disposed to make a treaty with the United States and, I doubt not, to regard

Sam Houston

it truly and preserve it faithfully if made. It was necessary for them to return to their people, and counsel before they could send a delegation. I requested that they should endeavor to see both tribes of the Comanches, as well as the Pawnees and their bands, that when a peace is made it may be complete and lasting between all the tribes that meet in convention. I presented a medal of General Jackson, to be conveyed to the principal chief (who was not present), with the proper explanations. I do not doubt that it will have an excellent effect in favor of the wishes of the commissioners.

You may rest assured that all the information in my power shall be collected and presented in such character as will be most useful to your commission. I am at a loss for the means to enable the delegation to reach Fort Gibson; but, so far as my resources will enable me, nothing shall be wanting on my part to realize the wishes of my government, and bring about a general peace. If anything can defeat the present expectations, it will be the indirect influence of the Spaniards, who are jealous of everybody and everything; but even this, I trust, will not prevail.

I will leave here shortly for the interior, where I have promised to meet the Indians preparatory to their start for Fort Gibson. They are a dilatory people, and very formal in all matters of a national character. Should anything occur, in the meantime, contrary to my expectations, I will apprise you of it with pleasure. You will be so kind as to forward a copy of this communication to the secretary of war, that he may be apprized

Sam Houston

of the prospect of peace with the Indians of Texas.

These plans, unfortunately, were never carried out, largely because of a change in front on the part of the Mexican officials. Coming to sudden suspicion that the treaty might give the United States a very powerful influence among the Indian tribes, they refused to grant the Comanches permission to make the journey to Fort Gibson. As a consequence, the Indians again began their raids on white settlements, continuing and increasing border terrorism. The feeling that Mexico *wanted* the warfare to persist added materially to the bitterness of the Texans, and increased American eagerness to purchase Texas so that the frontier could be protected.

Houston also wrote to Jackson from Natchitoches, reporting on what he had seen and heard. The letter is well worth printing, for it gives full answer to the lies that he was sent to Texas for the sole purpose of inciting a rebellion, thus enabling the South to have new territory for the extension of slavery:

Natchitoches, Louisiana,
February, 13, 1833.

DEAR SIR:

Having been as far as Bexar, in the province of Texas, where I had an interview with the Comanche Indians, I am in possession of some information that will doubtless be interesting to

Sam Houston

you, and may be calculated to forward your views, if you should entertain any, touching the acquisition of Texas by the United States. That such a measure is desirable by nineteen twentieths of the population of the province, I can not doubt. They are now without laws to govern or protect them. Mexico is involved in civil war. The federal constitution has never been in operation. The government is essentially despotic, and must be for some years to come. The rulers have not honesty, and the people have not intelligence.

The people of Texas are determined to form a state government, and to separate from Coahuila; and, unless Mexico is soon restored to order, and the constitution revived and re-enacted, the province of Texas will remain separate from the confederacy of Mexico. She has already beaten and expelled all the troops of Mexico from her soil, nor will she permit them to return. She can defend herself against the whole power of Mexico; for really Mexico is powerless and penniless to all intents and purposes. Her want of money, taken in connection with the course which Texas must and will adopt, will render a transfer of Texas inevitable to some power; and if the United States does not press for it, England will most assuredly obtain it by some means. Now is a very important crisis for Texas, as relates to her future prosperity and safety, as well as the relation it is to bear toward the United States. If Texas is desirable to the United States, it is now in the most favorable attitude, perhaps, that it can be, to obtain it on fair terms. England is press-

Sam Houston

ing her suit for it, but its citizens will resist if any transfer should be made of them to any other power but the United States.

I have traveled nearly five hundred miles across Texas, and am now enabled to judge pretty correctly of the soil and the resources of this country. And I have no hesitation in pronouncing it the finest country, to its extent, upon the globe; for, the greater portion of it is richer and more healthy, in my opinion, than West Tennessee. There can be no doubt but the country east of the Rio Grande will sustain a population of ten millions of souls. My opinion is, that Texas will, by her members in convention of the first of April, declare all that country as Texas proper, and form a state constitution. I expect to be present at the convention, and will apprise you of the course adopted as soon as its members have taken a final action. It is probable I may make Texas my abiding place; in adopting this course, I will never forget the country of my birth. From this point I will notify the commissioners of the Indians, at Fort Gibson, of my success, which will reach you through the war department.

I have with much pride and inexpressible satisfaction seen your messages and proclamation touching the nullifiers of the south and their "peaceful remedies." God grant that you may save the Union! It does seem to me that it is reserved for you, and you alone, to render millions so great a blessing. I hear all voices commend your course, even in Texas, where is felt the liveliest interest for the preservation of the republic.



JAMES BOWIE

Sam Houston

Where is there a word in this that shows secret understanding, a scheme of conquest or any interest in slavery? Houston knew, as everybody knew, that John Quincy Adams had instructed Poinsett to make an offer for the purchase of Texas as far back as 1825, and that it was a favorite project of Henry Clay, the Secretary of State; he knew also that Andrew Jackson, assuming the presidency in 1829, came to hold the opinion that the acquisition of Texas was necessary for the peace and safety of our southwestern border, and had authorized our minister to pay \$5,000,000 for the province if Mexico showed a disposition to sell.

Under the circumstances, what more natural than that Houston should write to the President, giving his first-hand investigations and opinions for what they were worth? Mexican rule, as he plainly stated, was indeed a mere shadow, owing to the continual revolutions that shook the unhappy land, and on all sides there were rumors that England planned the acquisition of Texas by trade or purchase. It was also the case that many Texans, convinced that Mexico could not put her house in order, were openly in favor of annexing Texas to the United States. All of this was valuable information, and Houston was right in forwarding it. Jackson, however, did not answer the letter, nor is there any record of correspondence between the two from that time on.

His reports made, Houston now returned to Texas for the purpose of forwarding the Indian delegates to

Sam Houston

Fort Gibson, only to find that the Mexican authorities had virtually forbidden the Comanches to keep their pledges. Thwarted in this undertaking, he rode to Nacogdoches, where he learned that he had been unanimously elected as a delegate to the convention. Deeply moved by this generous act, and in love with the new land, the exile announced his intention to become a Texan, and proceeded at once to San Felipe.

The rude cabin in which the convention met offered a wide contrast to the shaded state house in Philadelphia, and the fifty unkempt pioneers presented a far different appearance from those carefully groomed, aristocratic gentlemen who gathered in Independence Hall to frame a constitution for the United States. Many, like Houston, wore buckskins and a blanket, and sleeping on the ground with a saddle for a pillow did not lend itself to careful toilets. It was a parliamentary assemblage, however, that did not lack dignity, for such as were not scholars had been trained to alert intelligence by the demands of frontier life, and all were animated by the true Anglo-Saxon passion for freedom and hatred of oppression.

As the main object of the meeting was to ask for separate statehood, the great importance was to frame a tentative constitution, and Sam Houston became head of the drafting committee by acclamation. No man was more headlong, hot-tempered and impatient than the hero of Horseshoe Bend, but as he had proved both in Congress and as Governor of Tennessee, these

Sam Houston

fiery qualities were underlaid by common sense and shrewd judgment. However furiously Houston might charge about in trivial times, indulging moods and vanity, an hour of crisis always found him with a mind of ice. Now faced by a solemn responsibility, he put away his theatricalism and fondness for dramatic effects, settling down to the difficult business of devising a constitution that would meet the needs of Texas and at the same time win Santa Anna's approval.

Although he had written to President Jackson that Texas seemed to have broken with Mexico, a more careful study of the situation now caused Houston to change his opinion. Austin, out of his intimate knowledge of Mexican affairs, declared positively that no president would dare to sell Texas to the United States, and that the colonists were far too weak to dream of rebellion. Santa Anna had promised the colonies justice and reform, and Austin urged that it were best and wisest to assume his good faith.

Houston's own observations brought him to the same conclusion, and when reckless delegates clamored for independence, he stood shoulder to shoulder with Austin in crushing the proposal. More than that, he framed a constitution that was diplomatically silent with respect to controversial matters. Religious liberty, for instance, was a general demand, but Houston pointed out that Mexico was a Catholic country, and that it would be fatal to arouse the enmity of the

Sam Houston

Church. Another victory was a clause that denounced and condemned the African slave trade.

David G. Burnet, a New Jersey man who had fought in the wars for South American independence, was in charge of the memorial that asked for separation from Coahuila. It was a singularly able document, arguing that Texas had been promised separate statehood whenever its population justified, and dealing resolutely, although temperately, with the evils and injustices worked by the union with Coahuila: oppressive taxation but not one cent spent for the development of Texas or the protection of her people; wasteful sales of the public land of Texas; a capital and courts seven hundred miles distant from the Texas colonies; and laws either burdensome or else framed without the least regard for the needs of Texas. At the close there was this pledge of loyalty to the Mexican government in return for justice:

We believe that, if Texas were admitted to the Union as a separate state, she would soon figure as a brilliant star in the Mexican constellation, and would shed a new splendor around the illustrious city of Montezuma. We believe she would contribute largely to the national wealth and aggrandizement—would furnish new staples for commerce, and new materials for manufactures. The cotton of Texas would give employment to the artisans of Mexico; and the precious metals, which are now flowing into the coffers of Eng-

Sam Houston

land, would be retained at home, to reward the industry and remunerate the ingenuity of native citizens.

The honorable Congress need not be informed that a large portion of the population of Texas is of foreign origin. They have been invited here by the magnificent liberality and plighted faith of the Mexican government; and they stand pledged, by every moral and religious principle, and by every sentiment of honor, to requite that liberality, and to reciprocate the faithful performance of the guarantee to "protect the liberties, property, and civil rights," by a cheerful dedication of their moral and physical energies to the advancement of their adopted country. But it is also apparent to the intelligence of the honorable Congress that the best mode of securing the permanent attachment of such a population is to incorporate them into the federal system, on such equitable terms as will redress every grievance, remove every cause of complaint, and insure, not only an identity of interests, but an eventual blending and assimilation of all that is now foreign and incongruous.

The infancy of imperial Rome was carried to an early adolescence by the free and unrestricted admission of foreigners to her social compact. England never aspired to "the dominion of the seas" until she had united the hardiness of Scotland and the gallantry of Ireland to her native prowess. France derives her greatness from the early combination of the Sali, the Frank, and the Burgundian. And Mexico may yet realize

Sam Houston

the period when the descendants of Hernando Cortez have been strengthened and embellished by the adoption into their national family of a people drawn by their own gratuitous hospitality from the land of Washington and freedom.

When Stephen Austin set out for the City of Mexico, bearing the memorial, there was no doubt in the minds of the colonists that the petition would be granted. Had they not fought with Santa Anna and the patriot forces against the tyrannies of Bustamante and the centralists? And was Santa Anna not now in the president's chair, pledged to restore the constitution of 1824? Had he not declared his love for Austin time and again?

Where the Texans blundered, even as the people of Mexico blundered, was in an entirely mistaken estimate of the purposes and character of Santa Anna. He was known to be a traitor, of course, for five rulers had felt the pains of his treachery, but such were his professions of patriotism, the plausibility of his passionate oratory, that he had escaped all odium. Now that he was in the president's chair at last, and possessed of the power for which his hands had itched, the hidden lusts of the creature broke through all restraint.

A liar, a coward, a thief, a butcher and a drug fiend, only the Caligulas and Neros of ancient Rome offer a counterpart for the incredible creature who was to curse his land for thirty long and terrible years.

Sam Houston

Time after time he was compelled to flee the country by reason of his rapacities and depravities, but always was he brought back and restored to power. It was never that the people trusted him after 1832; where his strength lay was in his understanding of the mercenaries that made up the Mexican army. For them he was the great apostle of loot, giving his soldiers every high privilege of drunkenness and plunder, and from general to private, all adored him.

The rich merchant class and the landed aristocracy hated Santa Anna, knowing that he would rob them whenever the people had been stripped bare, but his hold over the army gave them no choice. Armed force was the one thing that enabled them to retain their privileges, the one chance of keeping the populace in check, and for this force it was necessary to bargain with Santa Anna. Always glad to see him go, the Old Order invariably reached a point where it was glad to raise the money to get him back.

It was the unleashed Santa Anna that Stephen Austin found when he reached the City of Mexico, a drug-maddened dictator no longer in need of the Texans or their rifles. Coldly received, Austin courageously pressed his mission, and as a result of his insistence, was finally arrested and thrown into a dungeon. For seventeen months the unfortunate envoy was held *incommunicado*, denied every creature comfort, and it was not until October, 1833, that he was released from his underground cell. Even then

Sam Houston

he was kept under surveillance, virtually a prisoner, for still another year.

Meanwhile the Texans were suffering new woes under the dishonest and oppressive rule of Coahuila, for not content with looting the state treasury, the legislature had fallen into the habit of selling great stretches of the public domain in Texas for a few cents an acre. The colonists cursed and groaned, but fearful of adding to Austin's jeopardy, endured injustice with as good a grace as possible.

[VIII]

THE TEXANS REBEL

THE spring months of 1835 found Santa Anna's evil rule showing every sign of collapse. Stirred to revolt by unbearable oppressions, various Mexican states had put citizen armies in the field, and no sooner did he crush one outbreak than a dozen others were reported. When he turned to the conservative element for money with which to buy munitions and supplies, he met with cold refusals, for even the Old Order had sickened of his lusts and corruptions.

Desperately casting around for some expedient that might save him, his muddled mind recalled the Bustamante coup of 1830, the Alaman theory that a foreign war would always blind people to domestic wrongs. The Texans were all Americans and heretics, they had but recently insisted upon setting up a state government of their own, and all Mexico knew that the United States had made repeated offers for the purchase of the province. What more simple than to announce a Texas rebellion fomented by the "Colossus of the North"?

Sam Houston

On fire with enthusiasm for the plan, he immediately issued this proclamation: "The colonists established in Texas have shown unequivocally to what extremes they are prepared to go in their perfidy, ingratitude and treachery. Forgetting their duty to the Supreme Government and to the nation which has so generously given them a place in her bosom, with fertile lands for cultivation, and all the natural resources necessary for their bountiful living, they have revolted against this nation under the pretext of sustaining a system, a change which has been desired by the majority of Mexicans; in this way hoping to hide their criminal ambitions to dismember the Republic."

This done, nothing remained but to *make* the Texans rebel. Whereupon he called in his brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto Cos, and after careful explanation of his plan, gave him some twelve hundred more or less trusted soldiers, and sent him to the Rio Grande. Whatever General Cos's lacks in the matter of brains and courage, it may not be denied that he carried out his orders with rare fidelity and a close approach to intelligence. On reaching Monclova, the capital of Coahuila-Texas, he dispersed the newly elected legislature, and installed a military government of his own choosing. Then, by way of making it a complete job, he arrested Governor Viesca and Colonel Ben Milam, the famous Texas *impresario* who happened to be in Monclova at the time.

When even these outrages did not stir the Texans

Sam Houston

to rebellion, however, the faithful Cos was at the end of his rope, being a man without ideas of his own. In his perplexity he sent to Santa Anna for further instructions, and the dictator, an expert in tyranny, returned word that Cos should order the Texans to surrender all public and private arms, reduce the militia to one for every five hundred inhabitants, and make arrests as frequently and offensively as possible.

These dispatches, by some chance or other, fell into Texan hands, and when the news reached San Felipe, the town seethed with excitement and indignation. William Barrett Travis, a young North Carolinian with fiery eyes and red hair, refused to confine himself to words, and after boldly announcing that it was a case of fight or eat dirt, called for volunteers. Twenty men responded, each carrying a rifle, and the little band set out for Anahuac, a town at the head of Galveston Bay. Captain Tenorio, the officer in command, had not been reared in the Spartan tradition, and a few shots were all that were necessary to gain his surrender.

At once a sharp division of opinion developed among the colonists. Many were convinced that the die had been cast, and that the one proper course was to expel every Mexican soldier within the borders of Texas. On the other hand, a strong peace party insisted that Santa Anna had undoubtedly issued his orders on false information, and that wise representation would result in their withdrawal. Above all, however, they dwelt

Sam Houston

upon the weakness of the colonies, and cried that it would be madness to take arms against a nation.

Sam Houston was one of those who felt that Travis and his volunteers had leaped without looking, and threw his powerful influence in favor of conciliatory measures.

As a consequence, General Cos was assured that Texas had no intention of resorting to arms, Travis was duly disavowed, and the captured garrison of Anahuac was released and forwarded to San Antonio with profound apologies. The following letter, written by Travis to Bowie on July 30, admirably sets forth the state of Texas feeling at the time:

The people are much divided here. The peace party, as they style themselves, I believe, are the strongest, and make much the most noise. Unless we could be united, had we not better be quiet, and settle down for a while? There is now no doubt but what a central government will be established. What will Texas do in that case? Dr. J. H. C. Miller, and Chambers, from Gonzales, are, I believe, for unqualified submission. I do not know the minds of the people upon the subject; but if they had a bold and determined leader, I am inclined to think they would kick against it. . . . General Cos writes that he wants to be at peace with us; and he appears to be disposed to cajole and soothe us. Ugartechea does the same, . . . God knows what we are to do! I am determined, for one, to go with my countrymen: right

Sam Houston

or wrong, "sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish," I am with them!

The clamor of the peace party completely deceived General Cos, and waxing arrogant, he sent an order from Monclova for the arrest of Travis and other leaders of the war party, particularly commanding the apprehension of Don Lorenzo de Zavala, a famous Mexican who had served as president of the first congress, and had been Secretary of the Treasury under Guerrero, Governor of the State of Mexico, and his country's ambassador to France. A patriot and a fierce democrat, Zavala was the leader of the rebellion against the tyrannies of Santa Anna, and on meeting with defeat, had fled to Texas to beg aid in his fight for the restoration of the democratic constitution of 1824. More than any other, Santa Anna hated and feared Zavala, and Cos was under orders to capture him at all costs.

Not a Texan but knew that arrest meant death for the proscribed men, and even the most ardent members of the peace party joined in the determination to resist Cos's order. Zavala, Travis and the others were given guards, and boldly walked the streets in plain sight of Mexican officials. War was now in the air, but at this moment Stephen Austin returned from his long imprisonment. He insisted that Santa Anna was merely gasconading, and as a result of his eloquent address to the people, it was decided that nothing

Sam Houston

should be done until after a General Consultation to be held on October 15.

On the heels of this decision, however, word came that General Cos was on the march, bearing new and harsher orders from Santa Anna. Not only were Travis and Zavala to be arrested, but *every* member of the war party, and *all* Anglo-Texans entering Texas after 1830 were to be expelled. Those that remained were to be disarmed, even municipal rule was to be military, and no colonization contract was to be permitted to go unrevised. Peace at once became craven folly, and the Committee of Safety of San Felipe, headed by Austin, issued a manifesto that cried boldly: "War is our only resource. There is no other remedy."

Up to this time, Sam Houston had been in sympathy with the peace party, for life had robbed him of illusion, and he could not blind himself to obvious facts. All the courage in the world could not make up for the disparity in numbers and resources, and he had the gloomy conviction that a Texas rebellion would mean only an invitation to slaughter. Others might deceive themselves with the hope that the United States would come to the aid of the Texans, but he knew Andrew Jackson too well for any such expectation. There was a treaty of peace and amity between Mexico and the United States, and Houston was well acquainted with Old Hickory's scrupulous regard for treaty obligations. When the ruthless

Sam Houston

purpose of Santa Anna stood revealed, however, and the choice was seen to be between resistance or extermination, Houston put away his doubts, and sprang forward with the same fierce resolution that had carried him over the breastworks of Horseshoe Bend.

Strangely enough, the struggle for the independence of Texas started much as did the war of American independence. The commandant at San Antonio sent two hundred men to Gonzales, a small settlement on the banks of the Guadalupe, about seventy miles away, under orders to seize a brass cannon that the municipality employed against Indian attacks. When word of the advance was received, John H. Moore, an old Indian-fighter, called the townspeople together, and at his announcement that *he* meant to fight, a shout of approval went up. Rallying as did the farmers at Concord, the colonists gave battle to the Mexicans in the early dawn of October 2, and before their courage and unerring aim, pompous Captain Casteneda fled the field, leaving a number of dead behind him.

Now was there an end to doubt and indecision. On October 5, the people of Nacogdoches elected Sam Houston commander-in-chief of the forces of eastern Texas, and from San Felipe, Austin and Zavala sent a call for volunteers to rush to Gonzales. From border to border wild riders carried the news, and on the 9th another victory added to joy and excitement. Captain George Collingsworth, assembling some fifty neighbors, made a night assault on Goliad and cap-

Sam Houston

tured the town, together with \$10,000 in money and a large amount of munitions and supplies, all without losing a man.

A member of the party whose presence had not been counted upon was Colonel Ben Milam, supposed to be in a Mexican prison. "Old Ben," however, had managed to escape, and his thorough knowledge of Mexico carried him safely through six hundred miles of peril. Strangely enough, it was a journey that he had made before, for he had followed Xavier Mina, in 1817, and was one of the few survivors of that tragic expedition. Milam, hiding in a thicket near Goliad on the night of Collingsworth's attack, came out of concealment when he heard familiar voices, and at once demanded a rifle. Few men in Texas were more widely known or better loved, and the dramatic incident of his return excited as much joy as the capture of Goliad.

Stephen Austin reached Gonzales on October 10, and was at once elected commander-in-chief by acclamation. Hearing that Cos, now in San Antonio, had sent to the Rio Grande for reenforcements, he decided upon an attack, and on October 20 the little army halted at Salada Creek, about five miles east of the town. Cos, summoned to surrender, sent back a contemptuous refusal, and as Austin debated his next course, Sam Houston arrived with his contingent of Red River volunteers. At once Austin begged him to take over the command, as he himself had never

Sam Houston

claimed to be a soldier, but Houston, fearful of jealousies, refused the honor and asked to be used in a subordinate capacity. At his suggestion, Austin marched to the Mission Francisco de la Espada, twelve miles lower down on the San Antonio River, and waited for reinforcements.

The General Consultation, called to form a provisional government, had met in San Felipe on October 16, but like Houston, the majority of the delegates had preferred fighting to statecraft, and were with Austin. It was not a state of affairs that could be continued with safety, and the army itself finally took the matter in hand. By an almost unanimous vote, the soldiers declared that it was the duty of the delegates to quit the field, and proceed to the important business of putting sound foundations under the frail structure of rebellion. As a consequence, Houston led a mournful march out of camp, and on November 3, fifty-five somewhat disconsolate figures sat down in San Felipe to build a state.

No sooner was the gathering assembled, however, than bitter differences developed. Many of the delegates, angered by the coming of Cos and his army, and carried away by the victories at Gonzales and Goliad, were strongly in favor of an immediate declaration of independence. As in the convention of 1833, it was Sam Houston who led the conservatives in defeating reckless gestures. Ten years later he was to be branded before the world as "Jackson's agent"

Sam Houston

in inciting the Texans to declare their independence, but in the San Felipe convention he stood like iron against the proposal. As a result of Houston's eloquence and unanswerable arguments, the preamble finally adopted contained this statement of purposes:

Whereas General Lopez de Santa Anna and other military chieftains have, by force of arms, overthrown the federal institutions of Mexico, and dissolved the social compact which existed between Texas and other members of the Mexican Confederacy, now the good people of Texas, availing themselves of their natural rights, solemnly declare:

1. That they have taken up arms in defense of their rights and liberties, which were threatened by the encroachments of military despots, and in defense of the Republican Principle of the Federal Constitution of Mexico of eighteen-hundred and twenty-four.

2. That Texas is no longer, morally or civilly, bound by the Compact of the Union; yet, stimulated by the generosity and sympathy common to a free people, they offer their support and assistance to such members of the Mexican Confederacy as will take up arms against military despotism.

3. That they do not acknowledge that the present authorities of the nominal Mexican Republic have the right to govern within the limits of Texas.

4. That they will not cease to carry on war

Sam Houston

against the said authorities while their troops are within the limits of Texas.

5. That they hold it to be their right, during the disorganization of the Federal system and the reign of despotism, to withdraw from the Union, to establish an independent government, or to adopt such measures as they may deem best calculated to protect their rights and liberties; that they will continue faithful to the Mexican government so long as that nation is governed by the Constitution and laws which were formed for the government of the Political Association.

Not even the defiance flung against England by the thirteen colonies was more gallant than the Texan challenge to Mexico. Back of the declaration of war was a population of less than 30,000, without money or military resources, and with knives and rifles as their only weapons, while opposed to them stood a nation of 7,000,000, possessing an army, a navy and well-filled arsenals. Every Texan, however, was a fighting man, trained in courage and craft by years of Indian warfare, and in the mighty cheer that greeted the call to battle, there was no note of fear, no doubt whatever as to ultimate victory.

On November 13, a constitution was framed that provided for a set of officials, the establishment of courts and a postal service, the creation of a regular army, treaties of friendship with the Indian tribes, and authorization to arrange for a loan of \$1,000,000. Stephen Austin, William H. Wharton and Dr. Branch

Sam Houston

T. Archer were named as commissioners to proceed to the United States for the purpose of floating this loan, also with authority to ask and press for aid in the struggle.

More important than the choice of a governor was the selection of a commander-in-chief, and when the convention offered the post to Sam Houston without a dissenting vote, he had the right to feel that Big Drunk was a name that had been lived down. It was not mere physical courage which commended him, for in that wild frontier society, bravery was as much an accepted fact as sun and air. Nor was it because of his military experience, for there were men among the colonists who knew far more of drill and strategy than the hero of Horseshoe Bend.

What led to Sam Houston's election as chief of the rebel army was *character*. After entering Texas a broken man, a common drunkard, the Texans had seen him throw off his melancholy and his dissipations, and rise to a new and finer manhood. When waves of passion swept the colonies, and men shouted in an emotionalism that had no connection with mental processes, they had watched Sam Houston keep his head, and had ever found his counsel sound. Above all else, they recognized in him the necessary capacity for *leadership*, a vital and imperative quality among men without experience in discipline or subordination.

With a commander-in-chief duly chosen, the convention turned to the election of other officers, and as

Sam Houston

a result of balloting, Henry Smith was made governor, and James W. Robinson, lieutenant-governor. Much trouble would have been saved had Stephen Austin been named as head of the provisional government, but there was a general feeling that he was more needed in the United States by reason of his high standing and impressive, persuasive personality. Hot-tempered, bull-headed Henry Smith, as a consequence, took the helm in his incompetent hands, and away went the frail ship of state on its stormy voyage.

[IX]

A DISASTROUS VICTORY

STEPHEN AUSTIN, left in charge of the Texas army, showed little disposition to take the aggressive, and his caution had good grounds. The troops under him numbered but five hundred, while Cos was known to have thirteen hundred men as well as ample artillery. Moreover, the capture of San Antonio de Bexar, or Bexar, as it was commonly called, presented no easy task, for while the town was unwallled, its houses were of stone. The more he considered, the more Austin inclined to the belief that it was best to wait for reenforcements.

It was a decision that met with small favor from the wild spirits that surrounded him. Colonel Frank Johnson, who had been a leader of the war party, urged an assault, headlong Ben Milam burned to avenge his imprisonment, Bowie was as contemptuous of Mexicans as he was of Indians, James W. Fannin, a reckless Georgian, hated nothing so much as inaction, and "Deaf" Smith and Henry Karnes pledged their reputations that an attack would end in victory. Smith, a squat Samson with a squeaky voice, had

Sam Houston

fought with Long in 1819, and was matched only by Karnes, an old trapper, when it came to woodcraft and prairie warfare.

Finally overcoming Austin's caution, Bowie and Fannin fared forth with ninety men to pick a more strategic camp site, and after a day of scouting, bedded down at the old mission of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, about two miles from the town. The Mexicans discovered them, and during the night Cos sent out his soldiers, and formed an iron ring about the encampment. Leaving orders that no prisoners were to be taken, for he considered the skirmish already won, the confident commander then returned to his repose.

As dawn broke the Mexican bugles sounded, and cavalry, infantry and artillery advanced in full certainty of a quick and decisive victory. As was to prove the case in every encounter, the deadly rifle fire of the Texans more than balanced Mexican superiority in numbers and ordnance, the pioneers picking off the leaders of every charge, and dropping the gunners as fast as they tried to work the cannon. When the Mexicans confessed defeat by a disorderly flight, they left sixty-seven killed and forty wounded, while Bowie and Fannin had lost only one man.

Elated by the victory, the Texans insisted upon an immediate assault, and their clamor was reenforced by the daily arrival of other colonists. Moreover, volunteers from the United States began to come in,

Sam Houston

the first being the New Orleans Grays and a company from Mobile, about a hundred all told. These ardent youths, rushing to Texas with full expectation of battle and glory, were naturally in favor of a direct attack, branding caution as cowardice. On November 25, fortunately enough for the harassed commander, Austin received the news of his appointment as a commissioner to the United States, and turned the army over to Edward Burleson with what must have been a sigh of relief.

Burleson, although a gallant Indian-fighter, fell into Austin's mistake in that he did not appreciate the resistless courage of his men or properly estimate the true incompetency of General Cos. Aside from these factors, he was correct in believing that it was a senseless thing for riflemen to deliver an assault against a town as defensively strong as San Antonio. The guns of Cos, mounted in the Main Plaza, commanded every street, the stone dwellings were forts in themselves, and there was the Alamo, the old abandoned mission, its walls bristling with cannon. Better far, figured Burleson, to starve the garrison into submission rather than waste life by an attempt to storm.

As days passed into weeks without action, the Texans sickened at the tedium of the siege, hundreds leaving the army to go back to their homes, and on December 4, when it was announced that there would be a retirement to winter quarters, less than five hundred men remained in camp. A roar of rage was the

Sam Houston

answer to the order, and suddenly a great voice boomed out, "Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?" Three hundred volunteers leaped forward, and General Burleson, accepting the inevitable, approved the reckless attempt.

It was arranged that Colonel J. C. Neill should make an artillery attack upon the Alamo, by way of creating a diversion, and under cover of darkness the Texans, led by "Deaf" Smith and Henry Karnes, crept close to the town. Just before dawn, Neill's guns began to boom, and with Milam heading one division, and Colonel Frank Johnson the other, the colonists charged. The Mexican sentinels, however, happened to be alert, and the guns in the Main Plaza, planted so as to command every approach, poured a raking fire down the narrow streets. Milam and his men smashed a way into the Garza home, while in the next block, Johnson took refuge in the house of Governor Veramendi, Bowie's father-in-law. Both dwellings were about one hundred yards from the Main Plaza, and behind their strong walls, the Texans prepared to stand siege.

All through the 5th, 6th and 7th, the gallant Three Hundred were subjected to furious artillery fire, but their rifles beat back the charges, and filled the Mexicans with a wholesome respect for American courage. A communicating trench was finally dug between the two houses, despite the lack of tools, and Henry Karnes, leaping into the open with his crowbar, tore

Sam Houston

a way into another house still nearer to the plaza. As was his habit, brave old Ben Milam bore himself with utter disregard of danger, but the afternoon of the third day saw him brought down by a bullet through the brain, a tragedy that passed the chief command to Johnson.

As if roused to greater fighting pitch by Milam's death, the Three Hundred now took the offensive, and began a battering drive straight at the plaza. The capture of the Navarro House was followed by a charge on the morning of the 8th that gained a foothold in the stone dwellings known as Zambrano Row. Again bringing crowbars into play, the attackers smashed from house to house, and by evening had reached a point where their rifles commanded the plaza. Late that night another charge carried the "priest's house," a position that overlooked the interior of the Mexican defense.

General Cos at once deserted the plaza and concentrated his forces in the Alamo. Under cover of darkness, five hundred additional soldiers from Mexico marched in to his aid, but the braggart and incompetent had no stomach for further fighting. His losses had been comparatively small, he outnumbered the Texans by five to one, and there was no lack of artillery and munitions, but the fighting heart was not there, and on the morning of the 9th he flew a flag of truce.

A meeting with Colonel Johnson arranged the terms

Sam Houston

of surrender, and the proof that the Texans were fighting to *stay* in the Mexican Union, and not to get out of it is found in the first paragraph in the article of capitulation: "That Cos and his officers retire with arms and private property into the interior of the Republic, under parole of honor that they will not in any way oppose the reestablishment of the federal constitution of 1824."

General Cos marched out of San Antonio on the 14th, leading 1105 soldiers, some 300 having decided to remain in Texas as permitted by the articles of surrender. Despite the generous treatment accorded him, and his equally solemn parole, it was not three months before the scoundrel and his men were back in Texas, taking part in the massacre of the Alamo.

With the departure of Cos and his effectives, not a single Santa Anna soldier was in arms north of the Rio Grande, and a wave of rejoicing swept the colonies. On all sides there was a happy conviction that the war had been fought and won, and not only did the fighting force return to their homes, but with the passing of danger came an outbreak of mean factionalism, which peril had managed to keep in check.

Only Houston was not deceived. Knowing that Santa Anna would not rest until he had wiped out the shame of Cos's surrender, the commander-in-chief wanted to proceed at once to the formation of an army, but his hands were tied by the stupid antagonism of the council. Claiming to be fearful that the estab-

Sam Houston

lishment of a regular army meant militarism, the fools refused to pass the necessary ordinances and gave their time to quarreling over offices. A sudden wave of popular disgust threatened to sweep the whole government out of office, and it was Houston who averted disaster by his speech in support of the government. His reward was an order fixing his headquarters at Washington, fifty miles away, where he had to sit with no other occupation than thumb twiddling.

Following up its policy of obstruction and insubordination, the council now usurped authorities that it did not possess, bringing on a bitter clash with Governor Smith. General Mexia, returning from a disastrous attempt to capture Tampico, resulting in the death of thirty-one American volunteers, had the impudence to propose another invasion of Mexico, and when the governor vetoed a resolution indorsing his crazy project, the council repassed it over his veto. In addition, the council elected D. C. Barret to be judge advocate general, and appointed Edward Gritton as collector of port at Copano, whereupon Governor Smith refused to confirm the appointments, charging that Gritton was a traitor and a Mexican spy, and accusing Barret of a variety of crimes that ranged from counterfeiting to embezzlement.

From his headquarters at Washington, Houston viewed the wrangling with despair, for he knew that San Antonio was not the end but simply the beginning. His pleas for haste, however, were not heeded,

Sam Houston

and it was well into December before he gained authority to make a call for volunteers. A bounty of six hundred and forty acres of land was offered to those enlisting for two years; and for one year, a bounty of three hundred and twenty acres, and the rights of citizenship were extended to all who united *in defending the republican principles of the constitution of 1824*. The call ended on this high note:

Citizens of Texas, your rights must be defended. The oppressors must be driven from our soil. Submission to the laws and union among ourselves will render us invincible. Subordination and discipline in our army will guarantee to us victory and renown. Our invader has sworn to exterminate us, or sweep us from the soil of Texas. He is vigilant in his work of oppression, and has ordered to Texas ten thousand men to enforce the unhallowed purposes of his ambition. His letters to his subalterns in Texas have been intercepted, and his plans for our destruction are disclosed. The hopes of the usurper were inspired by a belief that the citizens of Texas were disunited and divided in opinion; that alone has been the cause of the present invasion of our rights. He shall recognize the fallacy of his hopes in the union of her citizens, and their *eternal resistance* to his plans against constitutional liberty. We will enjoy our birthright, or perish in its defense. The services of five thousand volunteers will be accepted. By the first of March next we must meet the enemy with an army

Sam Houston

worthy of our cause, and which will reflect honor upon freemen. Our habitations must be defended; the sanctity of our hearths and firesides must be preserved from pollution. Liberal Mexicans will unite with us.

Confusion and defiance, however, had not yet run their course. Among those left in San Antonio after Cos's surrender was Dr. James Grant, a Scotchman whose estates in Parras had been confiscated. Eager for revenge and the recapture of his property, Grant urged an attack on Matamoros, declaring that its inhabitants would welcome the Texans, and that a march of conquest could then be made into the interior. The American volunteers were quick converts to the plan, likewise many Texans, and when Grant started off on the wild venture, only eighty sick and wounded men remained behind, and these stripped of supplies and medicines. Colonel Neill at once reported the condition of affairs to Houston, and the commander-in-chief poured out his anger and indignation in a letter to Governor Smith, urging him to adopt "some course that will redeem our country from a state of deplorable anarchy.

"Manly and bold decision alone can save us from ruin," he said. "I only require orders and they shall be obeyed. If the government now yields to the unholy dictation of speculators and marauders upon human rights, it were better that we had yielded to the despotism of a single man, whose ambition might have

Sam Houston

been satisfied by our unconditional submission to his authority, and a pronouncement, for which we are asked, in favor of his power.

"In the present instant the people of Texas have not even been consulted. The brave men who have been wounded in the battles of Texas, and the sick from exposure in her cause, without blankets or supplies, are left neglected in her hospitals; while the needful stores and supplies are diverted from them, without authority and by self-created officers, who do not acknowledge the only government known to Texas and the world. Within thirty hours I shall set out for the army, and repair there with all possible dispatch. I pray that a confidential dispatch may meet me at Goliad, and, if I have left, that it may pursue me wherever I may be. No language can express my anguish of soul. Oh, save our poor country!—send supplies to the wounded, the naked, the sick, and the hungry for God's sake! What will the world think of the authorities of Texas?"

In a despairing effort to defeat Grant's project, Houston set out for Refugio on January 8, but even as he rode, the headstrong council actually authorized the Matamoros expedition by appointing Colonel Frank Johnson to command it. As if anxious to spare no pains to add to chaos, the council then appointed Captain Fannin as its agent to borrow money for the expedition, to collect the necessary troops and to hold an election for the commander and other officers.

Sam Houston

Fannin, although a colonel in the regular army, and sworn to loyalty, at once threw off all obedience to General Houston, his commander-in-chief, and ordered a concentration of volunteers at San Patricio. Then holding an election, he won the post of colonel, while Major William Ward, who had come from Georgia at the head of 112 men, was elected lieutenant-colonel. While this mutinous business was going on, Colonel Johnson issued proclamations of his own, styling himself head of the Federal Volunteer Army and calling for men to invade Mexico.

Houston reached Goliad on January 16, and found word from Colonel Neill that he was in daily expectation of being attacked by a Mexican force. Keenly alive to the futility of attempting to hold isolated San Antonio with a small force, the commander-in-chief sent Governor Smith this outline of his plans.

Colonel Bowie will leave here in a few hours for Bexar, with a detachment of from twenty to fifty men. Captain Patton's company, it is believed, is now there. I have ordered the fortifications in the town of Bexar to be demolished; and, if you should think well of it, I will remove the cannon and other munitions of war to Gonzales and Copano, blow up the Alamo, *and abandon the place, as it will be impossible to keep up the station with the volunteers.* The sooner I can be so authorized, the better it will be for the country. In an hour I will take up the line of march for Refugio mission, with a force of about two

Sam Houston

hundred and nine effective men, where I will await orders from your excellency. I do not believe that an army of such small force should advance upon Matamoros, with a hope or belief that the Mexicans will co-operate with us. I have no confidence in them; the disaster at Tampico should teach us a lesson to be noted in our future operations. . . .

I will leave Captain Wyatt in command at this post, until I can relieve him with thirty-five regulars now at Refugio. I pray your excellency to cause all the regulars now enlisted to be formed into companies, and marched to headquarters. It will be impossible to keep up garrisons with volunteers. Do forward the regulars. . . . I would myself have marched with a force to Bexar, but the Matamoros fever rages so high that I must see Colonel Ward's men. You can have no idea of the difficulties I have encountered. Better materials were never in ranks. The government and all its officers had been misrepresented to the army.

Well for Texas had Houston's plans received authorization. Colonel Neill, however, reported to Governor Smith that he lacked ox-teams for the removal of the guns, and instead of telling him to spike them, the governor sent William Barrett Travis and a handful of men to reenforce the garrison. Bowie reached San Antonio to find Travis in charge, and after discussion, the two agreed to share the command pending further instructions.

Sam Houston

Proceeding to Refugio, Houston discovered that not one of his orders had been carried out. There were no supplies, and what was worse, little hopes of securing them, for Fannin, Johnson and Grant had laid the country bare by their confiscations. Some volunteers were on the ground, but they were without money, food and clothing, and evinced a very natural unwillingness to obey orders until their needs had been met. Even as Houston strove to bring order out of chaos, Colonel Johnson rode into Refugio at the head of his reckless horsemen.

For the first time, Houston learned of the fact that the council had virtually set him aside, giving Fannin and Johnson independent authority. Even more of a blow was Johnson's news that fiery Governor Smith had been deposed by the council, and a brand-new convention called for March 1, a proceeding that left the distracted colonies without any pretense of government. It was a very madness of treason, as Houston saw it, but under the circumstances there was nothing for him to do but return to San Felipe, and wait until some source of authority should be set up.

As he rode away, accompanied only by a faithful few, all of his old melancholy returned to take possession of heart and soul. Desperate as the chances of Texas had been before, hate and division now gave them an effect of absolute hopelessness, and he was half of a mind to quit the bedlam of contending

Sam Houston

ambitions, and go back to his life among the Cherokees. Hours of bitter, brooding silence, however, were suddenly broken by his announcement of a passionate resolve. He would stay and fight, and by the gods, he would win! All that the people needed for sensible action was honest information, and he would give it to them though he had to strip the hide from every rascal in the whole of Texas.

While these mean factional quarrels wasted the time and energy of the colonists, Santa Anna was coming from Mexico by forced marches. Shortly before his departure, he had butchered 2,500 citizen soldiers in Zacatecas, and then burned the city, a barbarity that had chilling effect on voluntary enlistment. By conscripting Indians, however, and drawing heavily on the prison population, he had managed to gather a considerable army, and as he drove the freezing, half-starved rabble over the bleak mountain ranges, opium and ignorance joined to make the dictator feel that his star was again in the ascendent.

The "cowardly Texans," to be sure, could not offer more than nominal resistance, but at his side was the literary Almonte, whose facile pen could be depended upon to transform every skirmish into a great battle with victory won by the courage and Napoleonic genius of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. It was annoying, of course, to be forced to leave the cockpits and other pleasures of the capital, but it would not be

Sam Houston

for long, and when he returned from his extermination of the "heretics," surely the people would forget the past and put aside their abominable rebellions.

At the Rio Grande he met the crestfallen Cos and his battered troops, and in shameless disregard of the fact that they had given their paroles, Santa Anna took the whole eleven hundred with him on the march to San Antonio. Many of the command had died of cold and hunger on the dreadful journey from San Luis Potosi, but even so, the army numbered between six and seven thousand. Seizure of the seaports, cutting off supplies, would have put Texas at the dictator's mercy, but his rage had been fired by Cos's surrender of San Antonio, and nothing could be considered until that shame had been wiped out.

[X]

THE ALAMO

THE sweep of rebellion in Mexico had firmly persuaded Travis and Bowie that Santa Anna could not possibly proceed against Texas, and even when sentinels shouted the alarm from the belfry of old San Fernando, they were not believed. Only when Captain J. W. Smith rode over the crest of Prospect Hill, and ran squarely into the vanguard of the Mexican army, did the reckless, daredevil leaders awake to the imminence of their peril. As Houston had so clearly foreseen, factionalism had prevented reenforcement of the garrison, and the fighting force that faced an army numbered one hundred and fifty-six. To attempt to hold San Antonio with this handful was plainly impossible, and Travis ordered an instant removal to the Alamo.

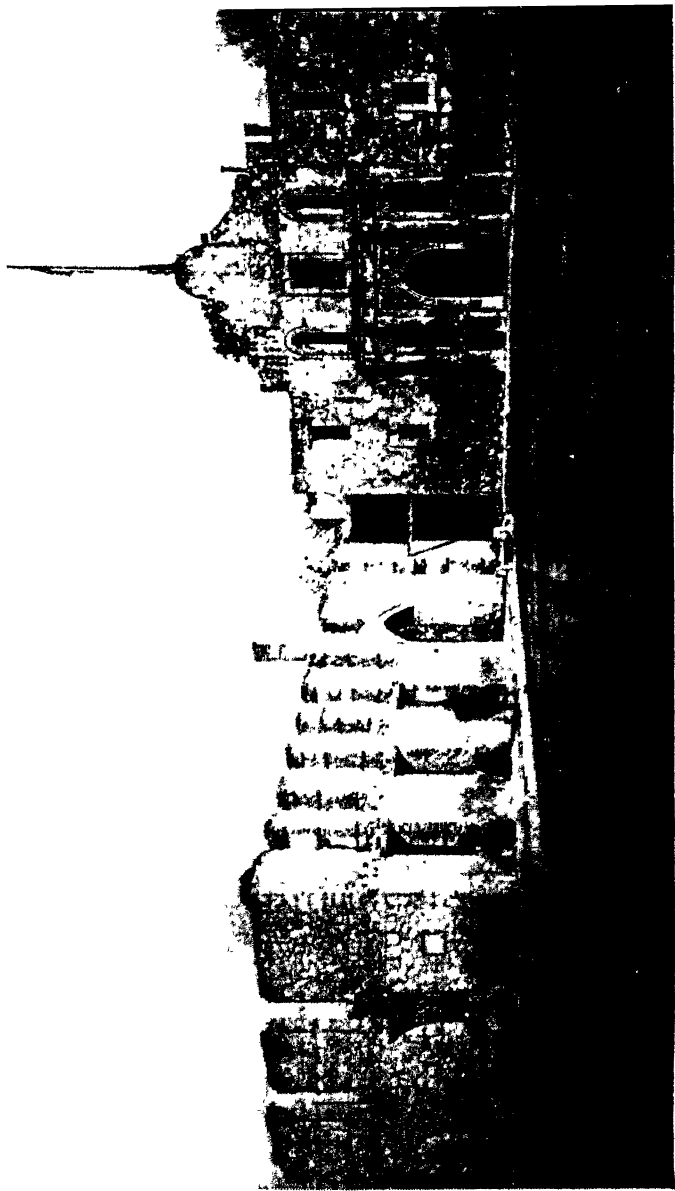
Bowie lay ill in the Veramendi home, suffering from typhoid pneumonia, but when a messenger brought word of the retreat to the mission, he dragged himself up from his bed, despite the pleading of his women-folk, and managed to mount a horse. The wife of young Lieutenant Dickinson, carrying her

Sam Houston

baby, was another who refused to be left behind, clinging determinedly to her soldier husband. Down dusty Commerce Street clattered the doomed cavalcade, and crossing the wooden bridge over the sparkling waters of the San Antonio, sought refuge in the crumbling old structures built by the Franciscan fathers a hundred years before.

Had Travis possessed the strength to avail himself of its full possibilities, the Alamo might well have proved an impregnable fortress, for while the roof of the church had fallen in, the stone walls still stood, twenty-two and a half feet high and three feet thick. On the north side was a high-walled yard, one hundred feet square, with a one-story convent building forming its western boundary, and from the southern corner of the church a stout cedar stockade ran diagonally to a long low structure that had been used as a prison. Fronting the three buildings was a large plaza, inclosed by an eight-foot wall, and back of the church, on the east, flowed an artificial stream. Moreover, Cos had erected gun platforms, and there was also a goodly number of sandbags for purposes of barricade.

With only 145 effectives, however, the extent of the fortifications was a weakness, but with gay courage the Texans mounted their fourteen small guns on walls and roofs, selecting strategic spots, and then scurried over the plain, driving in beef cattle and trying to collect corn. On the morning of February 23, as they



THE ALAMO

© Brown Brothe

Sam Houston

still hunted provisions, Santa Anna occupied the Main Plaza with one thousand men, planted a red flag on the tower of San Fernando, and then sent officers to the river-bank with a peremptory demand for surrender.

Escape was still open to the garrison, for the investment was far from complete, but it was the pride of those who held the Alamo that no foe had ever seen their backs. Travis and Bowie were famous for bravery in a land where courage was accepted as a matter of course; Bonham, the intrepid South Carolinian, found his joy in danger, and at the side of this trio stood none other than Davy Crockett, who had fought bears with his naked hands. The wild, rollicking Tennessean had arrived just a week before, entering Texas to strike a blow for freedom, and his bold eyes gleamed delightedly at sight of Santa Anna's army. The men that these heroes captained were of the same dauntless breed, frontier-forged and tempered in Indian encounters until each had the cut of a Toledo blade.

It was not only that the garrison preferred death to retreat, looking on flight as cowardly. There was the added fact that they regarded the defense of the Alamo as necessary to the safety of Texas and her people. Behind the outpost of San Antonio lay the scattered settlements of the colonists, ignorant of Santa Anna's sudden descent and as yet all unprepared for resistance. The offer of their lives as a

Sam Houston

barrier, even though quickly swept aside, might give time to mass against the invader, and in this belief, every man supported Travis in his contemptuous rejection of the demand to surrender, and shouted defiance as the Mexican horns sounded the *deguello*, a barbaric air that signified "no quarter."

As the first shots rang out, what a host of gallant shades must have gathered in the upper air to watch the last desperate struggle for the savage land that had cost them their own lives! Unhappy Coronado and iron-willed La Salle; the noble company of Franciscan fathers, who built missions and planted vineyards only to dye the waters of the irrigation ditches with their blood; luckless Magee, blowing out his brains in an hour of defeat and despair; Xavier Mina, perishing so far away from his own Navarre; Long, the dashing Tennessean; indomitable Moses Austin: at sound of the battle-cries, these and more trooped out of the past to look down with fierce intentness upon this final grapple for the mighty sweep of Texas.

All through the 23rd the Mexican guns kept up a furious bombardment, but as Santa Anna, with his usual genius for stupidity, had brought only light field-pieces and a few howitzers, the shells either struck harmlessly against the stone walls, or bounded around the plaza and convent yard. A sortie was attempted in the late afternoon, but such was the unfailing accuracy of the Texan fire that the dictator

Sam Houston

prudently decided to postpone an assault until all of his troops were on the ground. His caution added to the confidence of the defense, and Travis's first call to Texas had the blare of a trumpet.

"I have sustained a continuous bombardment for twenty-four hours," he wrote on the 24th, "and have not lost a man. The enemy have demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison is to be put to the sword if the place is taken. I have answered the summons with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. I call on you in the name of liberty, of patriotism, and of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch."

At Goliad, 150 miles away, sat Fannin with four hundred men, still intent on the crazy idea of invading Mexico, and Bonham volunteered for a dash through the lines to beg his help. Nothing is known of the daring ride except that Bonham succeeded, reaching Goliad more dead than alive. He found Fannin eager to come to the rescue, but this ill-fated commander ran into the disaster that dogged him to his tragic death. His wagons mired in the swollen streams, his oxen died, his provisions gave out, and after many bitter struggles, he and his men were forced to give up the effort.

Only the little town of Gonzales sent aid, Captain J. W. Smith and thirty-two colonists shooting and cutting their way into the Alamo on the night of

Sam Houston

March 1, entering in full knowledge of the fearful odds against Travis and his handful. These were the men who had started the rebellion by their refusal to surrender the town's one cannon to Cos, and loud were the shouts that greeted their coming. Davy Crockett laid aside his rifle for his beloved fiddle, and far into the night the "crazy Americans" amazed the Mexican sentinels with jig tunes and frontier ballads.

It was not long before the raging Santa Anna changed his mind about the fighting capacity of his foes, for the resistance of the Texans held like steel, taking deadly toll in Mexican lives. When General Castrillon attempted bridge building, his detachment was wiped out by deadly rifle fire before a retreat could be ordered; an effort to divert the waters of the ditches proved no less disastrous, and three times he failed to plant batteries in commanding positions. Crockett was famous for his marksmanship, but the Texans were little less unerring, and it proved death for any Mexican to come within a hundred yards of the Alamo.

After the eighth day, however, the strain began to tell even upon the steel frames of the frontiersmen. Slim rations did not bother them, for they were used to riding for long stretches without other provision than parched corn, but lack of sleep became a torment. Realizing the smallness of the garrison, Santa Anna was shrewd enough to keep his attacks going night and day, and at the end of a week, the Texans stag-

Sam Houston

gered like drunken men as they leaped from their pallets to man the walls.

New troops arrived constantly, and by March 3 an army of six thousand ringed the Alamo. Two batteries had finally been mounted on the mission side of the river, Travis and his men lacking strength for the usual fiery charge. To add to depression, Bonham returned with word that there was little hope of aid from Fannin. Instead of staying with the Goliad men, the young South Carolinian had chosen to share whatever fate might befall his companions, and dashing out of the wooded river bottom, had charged his bold way straight through Santa Anna's army to the gates of the Alamo.

That night, during a lull in the fighting, Travis called his hollow-eyed men about him in the nave of the old church, sentinels looking down from the gun platforms and the walls. Quietly enough, the blue-eyed, red-haired young leader—he was only twenty-eight—confessed that there seemed little likelihood of succor. There was, however, he pointed out, a fair chance of escape for all those who chose to avail themselves of it. The Gonzales men had cut through the Mexican lines only three days before, and they had just seen Bonham enter the gates, single-handed and alone. It proved that Santa Anna's investment was far from complete, and he felt certain that many might reach safety by slipping away, one at a time, under cover of the darkness.

Sam Houston

Flight could not now be considered as any reflection on honor or courage, for had all not sustained the attack of an army for nine long days and nights? Many of those before him had families, and particularly was this true of the Gonzales men, who had left their homes to come to the rescue. Who chose to leave would carry his Godspeed. It was a decision that each man must make for himself, and he had no desire to influence it, but for his own part he had made a vow that he would quit the Alamo only as a victor or a corpse. When he had finished, Travis drew a line in the dust with his sword, and asked quite simply, "Who stays with me?"

While their leader talked, the Texans sat without word or motion. Gone now was their noisy confidence and reckless gaiety, wiped out by the poison of exhaustion, but their eyes were as unafraid as when they had rejected Santa Anna's demand for an unconditional surrender. Only when Travis drew his line was there movement, and such was the unity of the leap that no man could say, "I was the first to cross."

All knew that the choice meant death, but they made it with the air of men who went to safety, ease and fortune. One alone failed to dash forward while Travis's words were still in the air. Bowie, sick unto death, had been carried out of the baptistry for the consultation, and lay with closed eyes, wasted and feeble, while the talk went on. Only when his comrades leaped to Travis's side, leaving him behind, did

Sam Houston

he manifest any sign of life. He raised himself by a supreme effort, his gray lips forming words that were half oath and half command, and not until his cot had been lifted across the line did he let his fever-racked head fall back on the pillow.

It was after the meeting that Travis wrote his last word to the outside world. The consciousness of doom was in every line, but nowhere a note of weakness, for in the name of himself and his men he promised Texas that "victory will cost the enemy so dear that it will be worse than defeat." For the first time there was reference to the reason for the stubborn defense, the refusal to retreat, the last paragraph expressing the garrison's conviction that they were creating a barrier for the people of Texas:

The power of Santa Anna is to be met here or in the colonies; we had better meet it here than to suffer a war of desolation to rage in the settlements. A blood-red banner waves from the church of Bexar, and in the camp above us, in token that the war is one of vengeance against rebels; they have declared us such, and demanded that we surrender at discretion, or this garrison should be put to the sword. Their threats have had no influence on me or my men, but to make all fight with desperation, and with the high-souled courage which characterizes the patriot who is willing to die in defense of his country's liberty and his honor. The bearer of this will give your honorable body a statement more in de-

Sam Houston

tail should he escape through the enemy's lines.
God and Texas! Victory or death.

Captain Smith, who had brought in the Gonzales contingent, was given the dispatch, and shortly before dawn slipped over the wall and crawled away through sand and sage-brush with the noiselessness of a snake. All during the 4th and 5th the Mexican guns kept up a steady bombardment, and sortie followed sortie, but still the defenders fought on, staggering automata driven forward by sheer force of will. The sick and wounded, refusing to stay in the hospital building, crept and stumbled from wall to wall, loading the hot rifles as fast as they were laid down.

Exasperated to the pitch of madness, Santa Anna now decided upon an assault in force, ordering that it be sustained until the walls were carried or until not one of his soldiers remained alive. Three thousand picked men were formed into four columns under command of General Castrillon, the Spaniard, for the dictator himself was never one to lead a charge, and two thousand cavalry were detailed to circle the Alamo to see that no Texan escaped. The front ranks were provided with scaling ladders, crowbars and axes, and at four o'clock on the morning of the 6th, the columns advanced to the assault, bare feet making no sound in the soft sand.

Inch by inch they crept forward through the pitch-black darkness, when suddenly a Texan watcher cried



DAVID CROCKETT

Sam Houston

the alarm. With the Mexicans at the walls, the cannon were useless save for one that Travis worked from the convent roof, but the deadly rifles laid the front lines in long windrows. One column attacked from the north, one from the west, and two from the south, and out of the knowledge that guns were trained on them from behind, Santa Anna's men charged with a courage born of desperation. Twice the three thousand hurled themselves against the walls and twice they were thrown back with fearful loss, but the third assault opened a breach in the convent's northern wall, and the Mexicans poured through the opening with the impact of a tidal wave.

Travis died by the side of his smoking gun, and Crockett went down at the door of the church, surrounded by a great pile of dead. Bowie, from his cot in the little cell at the right of the entrance, emptied his pistols as the Mexicans rushed into the room, but death came to him as he reached for his knife. Little Candelaria, one of the Veramendis, was supporting the wasted body in her young arms, and as the bayonets drove into Bowie's throat and breast, they gashed the child's soft cheek.

The last stand was in the body of the church where once Indian converts had prayed to a God of love and mercy. Ammunition gone, the Texans clubbed their rifles and used them as flails until beaten down by sheer weight of numbers. Now and then five or six Mexican bayonets, plunged hilt deep into a body,

Sam Houston

would toss it in the air like a bundle of hay. Man by man the defenders fell until only one remained alive. It had been agreed that the Alamo should be blown up in event of defeat, and Major Evans, bleeding from ghastly wounds, wrenched loose and staggered to the sacristy where the powder was stored. They butchered him at the doorway.

Five hours the struggle lasted—five hours during which not one cry for quarter had been heard—and when cautious Santa Anna entered the Alamo at nine o'clock, it was a shambles he looked upon. Every foot of church and convent yard was piled high with dead, while outside the walls were other red litters of what had once been living men.

Well was the dictator entitled to curse the "Texan dogs," for the capture of the Alamo had cost him four hundred killed and three hundred wounded. And equally was Texas entitled to cry to the world, "Thermopylæ had its messenger of defeat; the Alamo had none." Of the 182 men who faced the charge of 3000, all were dead, buried under a heap of slain. Two Mexican women—little Candelaria and her sister—were spared from slaughter, and the intervention of Almonte saved the lives of Mrs. Dickinson, her baby and a Negro boy. Only these five remained of the gallant band that had ridden so gaily across the wooden bridge eleven days before.

General Castrillon and other Mexican officers pleaded with Santa Anna that a noble foe should be

Sam Houston

given decent burial, but the incredible creature only cursed them. Men were sent into the woods for dead limbs and dry branches, and the poor sword-hacked, bullet-riddled bodies of the Texans were thrown upon the gathered brush, and made into a bonfire. What the flames did not consume was left to the coyotes, vultures and wild dogs, and not until months later were the ashes of the heroes reverently collected and given honorable interment.

While the fire licked at the blood-wet bodies, Santa Anna sent a boastful message to Mexico that the Alamo had been defended by a great army of Texans, and that his victory deserved to rank with the finest achievements of Napoleon, whereupon Secretary of State Monasterio hurried back fulsome congratulations, declaring: "You have garnished your temples with laurels of unwithering fame, and your victory will teach the sympathizers among our evil-disposed neighbors not to contest against your military genius."

[XI]

THE LONE STAR REPUBLIC

FIFTY-EIGHT delegates, duly elected representatives of the people of Texas, assembled on March 1 in a frame shanty in the little town of Washington on the banks of the Brazos. News of the Alamo had not yet come to them, nor was it known that Santa Anna and his army had crossed the Rio Grande, although information had been received that the dictator was gathering men for an invasion in force. The necessity for concerted action swept away mean angers and petty jealousies, and with enmities forgotten and unity recaptured, the Texans joined in a gesture of supreme defiance.

No longer was there any hope of compromise, for even the most optimistic held no further illusion of aid from the crushed and demoralized masses of Mexico. Stephen Austin, writing from the United States to Sam Houston, declared that "the time has come for Texas to assert her natural rights, and were I in the convention, I would urge an immediate declaration of independence. The information from Mexico is that all parties are against us . . . and

Sam Houston

that we have nothing to expect from that quarter but hostility." This letter, freely shown by Houston, had a powerful effect, and no man dissented from the cast of the die. All through the day and night of March 1 an able group worked on the document, and March 2 saw it given to the world. This was the preamble:

When a government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived, and for the advancement of whose happiness it was instituted; and so far from being a guarantee for their inestimable and inalienable rights, becomes an instrument in the hands of evil rulers for their oppression:

When the Federal Republican Constitution of their country, which they have sworn to support, no longer has a substantial existence, and the whole nature of their government has been forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted Federative Republic, composed of Sovereign States, to a consolidated military despotism, in which every interest is disregarded but that of the army and the priesthood, both the eternal enemies of civil liberty, the ever-ready minions of power, and the usual instruments of tyrants:

When, long after the spirit of the constitution has departed, moderation is at length so far lost by those in power that even the semblance of freedom is removed, and the forms themselves of the constitution discontinued, and so far from their petitions and remonstrances being regarded,

Sam Houston

the agents who bear them are thrown into dungeons, and mercenary armies sent forth to enforce a new government upon them at the point of the bayonet:

When, on consequence of such acts of malfeasance and abduction on the part of the government, anarchy prevails, and civil society is dissolved into its original elements: in such a crisis, the first law of nature, the right of self-preservation, the inherent and inalienable right of the people to appeal to first principles, and take their political affairs into their own hands in extreme cases, enjoins it as a right towards themselves, and a sacred obligation to their posterity, to abolish such government, and create another in its stead, calculated to rescue them from impending dangers, and to secure their welfare and happiness.

Here followed a statement of grievances, "submitted to an impartial world in justification of the hazardous but unavoidable step now taken." The wrongs inflicted by Coahuila, the oppressions of Bustamante, the overthrow of the constitution of 1824, the armed invasion of Cos, the death of civil government, all of these were briefly recited, after which the address declared:

These, and other grievances, were patiently borne by the people of Texas, until they reached that point at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue. We then took up arms in defense of the National Constitution. We appealed to our Mexican

Sam Houston

brethren for assistance; our appeal has been made in vain; though months have elapsed, no sympathetic response has yet been heard from the interior. We are, therefore, forced to the melancholy conclusion, that the Mexican people have acquiesced in the destruction of their liberty, and the substitution therefore of a military government; that they are unfit to be free, and incapable of self-government.

The necessity of self-preservation, therefore, now decrees our eternal political separation.

We, therefore, the delegates, with plenary powers, of the people of Texas, in solemn convention assembled, appealing to a candid world for the necessities of our condition, do hereby resolve and declare, that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended, and that the people of Texas do now constitute a *free, sovereign, and independent republic*, and are fully invested with all the rights and attributes which properly belong to independent nations; and, conscious of the rectitude of our intentions, we fearlessly and confidently commit the issue to the Supreme Arbiter of the destinies of nations.

Lorenzo de Zavala was among the first to affix his signature, feeling that the destruction of Santa Anna's power was the one hope of liberty for his unhappy country. Of the fifty-eight men who signed this declaration, putting their lives upon the hazard, three were Mexicans, one came from Ireland, one from Canada, one from England, one from Scotland and the

Sam Houston

rest were from the United States, all of the Anglo-Saxon stock that conquered the wilderness of the world. Sam Houston, forty-three years old at the time, was one of the elders of the group, for only nine were his seniors, thirty years being the average age.

With an enemy at the gates, the next business of importance was the selection of a commander-in-chief and with one accord, every eye turned to Houston. It was realized that the council had heaped him with humiliation, that his sound advice had been disregarded, and that his plans had been blocked at every turn, all unbearable to a man of his stormy pride. Just returned from the conferences with the Indians, he wore his buckskins and blanket, and as he listened to the vote, his grim, lined face was as impassive as that of any Cherokee chieftain. On every hand there was the fear that he would refuse the post, but Houston put duty above personal consideration, and a great sigh of relief swept the room as he signified his acceptance. Only one condition he imposed, and that was the draft of all men between the ages of seventeen and fifty and the increase of land bounties to volunteers.

On Sunday, March 6, a sweating courier brought in Travis's last appeal to the people of Texas. Even as the convention listened to the stirring words, the writer and his companions were being butchered, but the delegates, ignorant of the imminent nature of his

Sam Houston

peril, at once resolved that "the convention should immediately adjourn, arm and march to the relief of the Alamo." As in every other moment of crisis, when fury destroyed judgment, it was Sam Houston who averted the disastrous consequences of precipitate action.

Beating down clamor with his great voice, he branded the proposal as madness. The immediate need was a *government*. What good was the declaration of independence unless put upon bed-rock? Without a responsible, directing central authority, they were nothing but a mob. Continue your deliberations, he cried to the convention, elect officials, and create and operate the necessary machinery of administration. He himself would gather men for the relief of the Alamo, and leave for San Antonio at once. His arguments were hammer blows, and when he had finished the resolution was rescinded. Leaving at the conclusion of the speech, the commander-in-chief mounted his horse, and in company with three staff officers spurred away to the south at furious speed.

Reaching Gonzales, he found some three hundred volunteers trying to gather arms and provisions, but even as he gave orders for an immediate advance, a Mexican herder brought in the news of the Alamo's fall. Although Houston made public statement of disbelief, declaring the report a lying rumor, his heart chilled with a conviction of its truth, and he acted accordingly. At Goliad, unwallled and isolated, were

Sam Houston

four hundred men, and in the hope of averting another Alamo massacre, this dispatch was hurried to Fannin:

*Headquarters, Gonzales,
March 11, 1836.*

SIR:

You will, as soon as practicable after the receipt of this order, fall back upon Guadalupe Victoria, with your command, and such artillery as can be brought with expedition. The remainder will be sunk in the river. You will take the necessary measures for the defence of Victoria, and forward one-third the number of your effective men to this point, and remain in command until further orders.

Every facility is to be offered to women and children who may be desirous of leaving that place. Previous to abandoning Goliad, you will take the necessary measures to blow up that fortress; and do so before leaving its vicinity. The immediate advance of the enemy may be confidently expected, as well as a rise of water. Prompt movements are therefore highly important.

SAM HOUSTON,
Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

Fannin's four hundred, mostly volunteers from the United States and all adequately armed, would give an army of eight hundred when joined with the force at Gonzales, and Houston felt confident that it would

Sam Houston

re sufficient to stem Santa Anna's advance. On March 13, however, during his absence, Mrs. Dickinson and her baby reached Gonzales, and as she told the detailed story of the massacre, and repeated Santa Anna's threat to burn and kill throughout the length of Texas, terror spread like a prairie fire. Thirty-two of the Alamo's defenders were Gonzales men, and as the women who had lost husbands or sons screamed their grief, scores of the volunteers took horse, and rode away to protect their own homes.

Fearful that Santa Anna might strike, Houston decided to fall back to the Colorado, where Fannin was expected, and that night the miserable little handful that was the army of Texas set out on the retreat. Two wagons and two yoke of oxen were all that could be found to carry the supplies and munitions, and as the whips cracked, the wretched fugitives marched by the light of their burning homes. "Deaf" Smith and Henry Karnes were left behind as a rear-guard, and these iron souls were not of a mind to leave anything for Santa Anna and his Mexicans. Progress was slow, for in some instances men had to be sent thirty miles to bring in unprotected families, and it was not until the 15th that Houston had time to write the government from a camp on the Navidad:

My morning report, on my arrival in camp, showed three hundred and seventy-four effective men, without two days' provisions, many without arms, and others without any ammunition. We

Sam Houston

could have met the enemy, and avenged some of our wrongs; but detached as we were, without supplies for the men in camp of either provisions, ammunition, or artillery, and remote from succor, it would have been madness to hazard a contest. I had been in camp two days only, and had succeeded in organizing the troops. But they had not been taught the first principles of the drill. If starved out, and the camp once broken up, there was no hope for the future. By falling back, Texas can rally, and defeat any force that can come against her. . . .

I hope to reach the Colorado on tomorrow, and collect an army in a short time. I sent my aide-de-camp, Major William T. Austin, to Columbia this morning; for munitions and supplies, to be sent immediately; and to order the troops now at Velasco to join me, provided they had not been previously ordered by you to fortify Copano and Dimmit's Landing. I am fearful Goliad is besieged by the enemy. My order to Colonel Fannin, directing the place to be blown up, the cannon to be sunk in the river, and to fall back on Victoria, would reach him before the enemy would advance. That they had advanced upon the place in strong force, I have no doubt; and when I heard of the fall of the Alamo, and the number of the enemy, I knew it must be the case. . . .

Our forces must not be shut up in forts, where they can neither be supplied with men nor provisions. Long aware of this fact, I directed, on the 16th of January last, that the artillery should be removed, and the Alamo blown up; but it was

Sam Houston

prevented by the expedition upon Matamoros, the author of all our misfortunes.

As Houston continued his march to the Colorado, word was received that Fannin was preparing to defend Goliad, and that he had thrown up some earthworks to which the proud name of Fort Defiance had been given. With his almost uncanny gift of prescience, Houston marked the news as the doom of the garrison at Goliad, and turning to his aide-de-camp, he pointed to the disconsolate band that straggled across the prairie, saying: "Hockley, there is the last hope of Texas. We shall never see Fannin nor his men. With these soldiers we must achieve our independence or perish in the attempt."

Every mile added to despair, for the deserters had raced ahead, filling the countryside with terror, while from the direction of Goliad came news as black as that of the Alamo. There were rumors that Dr. Grant and his command had been defeated and slain to the last man, that many of the volunteers from the United States had been captured and killed, and that Fannin was surrounded without chance of escape. From the Colorado, reached and crossed on March 17, Houston reported to the government: "It pains me at heart that such consternation should be spread by a few deserters from the camp, but we are here, and if only three hundred remain on this side of the Brazos, I will die with them or conquer the enemy."

Sam Houston

Two days later the scouts reported the advance of a strong Mexican force, later learned to be a column under command of General Sesma, sent by Santa Anna to lay waste the country between San Antonio and Galveston Bay. Judging that it was Sesma's purpose to cross, Houston prepared an ambush on the eastern bank, but the premature firing of a musket warned the Mexicans, and they pitched camp on the west bank, as if waiting for reenforcements. Even as Houston, eager for the conflict, laid further battle plans, they were thrown into disarray by disturbing news from the seat of government.

The convention, left to its own devices after the departure of Houston, had formed a provisional government with David G. Burnet as president and Lorenzo de Zavala as vice-president, and on March 16 adopted a constitution for the new republic. News of the Alamo, however, followed by reports of Santa Anna's uninterrupted advance, threw the convention into panic, and no sooner had the constitution been signed than the members passed a resolution removing the seat of government to Harrisburg. It was a criminally stupid thing to do, as well as cowardly, for the flight confirmed the fears of the people, encouraging desertion as well as stopping army enlistments. As far east as the Neches and the Trinity, families thronged the river-banks, waiting for ferriage, and in the wild rout were many single men.

Added to Houston's bitter perplexities was the lack

Sam Houston

of supplies, artillery and munitions, for the Brazos settlements had not kept their promise. For all he knew, Santa Anna's entire army might reach the Colorado any day, or any hour, and the Texans had only rifles. Intensest of his anxieties, however, was the fate of Fannin. Small wonder that in writing to Secretary of War Rusk, the harassed commander-in-chief cried out the agony of his mind and heart:

You know I am not easily depressed, but, before my God, since we parted, I have found the darkest hours of my past life! My excitement has been so great that for forty-eight hours I have not eaten an ounce, nor have I slept. I was in constant apprehension of a rout; a constant panic existed in the lines. All would have been well, and all at peace on this side of the Colorado, if I could only have had a moment to start an express in advance of the deserters; but they went first, and, being panic-struck, it was contagious, and all who saw them breathed the poison and fled. It was a poor compliment to me to suppose that I would not advise the Convention of any necessity for its removal. . . . The retreat of the government will have a bad effect on the troops. . . .

On the morning of the 24th, General Tolsa came up with five hundred men, giving Sesma a total force of about twelve hundred. Outnumbered, and without artillery, Houston resolved to attack before additional

Sam Houston

reenforcements could arrive. There was the danger, of course, that a Mexican division might be swinging around to take him in the rear, but he shut his eyes to this possibility, and held to the hope that Fannin and his four hundred would be able to take care of any Mexican flank movement. The night decided upon was the 26th, but on the evening of the 25th, there came appalling news.

One Peter Kerr, a fugitive from Goliad, dashed into camp and before his mouth could be closed, shouted out the story of Fannin's stand and final capture. Houston, flying into one of his premeditated rages, branded the tale as a lie out of whole cloth, and roared orders for Kerr to be put under arrest as a mischief-making rascal, probably a Mexican agent. In his heart, however, he knew that Kerr was not lying, and when the camp was asleep, he slipped into the prisoner's tent and demanded full details. What the stunned commander-in-chief heard was far more heart-sickening than even the most gloomy of his own forebodings.

[XII]

THE GOLIAD MASSACRE

*F*ANNIN, most daring, foolhardy and ill-fated of all those brave souls who fought under the Lone Star banner, regarded the coming of Santa Anna and his army as no more than a vexatious interruption of his own plans for the capture of Matamoros and the conquest of Mexico. After his one vain effort to go to the aid of Bowie and Travis, the Alamo seems to have been dismissed from his mind, nor was he at all troubled by any fear that the turn of Goliad might come next. Nor were Dr. Grant and Captain Johnson, headquartered at San Patricio, any the less contemptuous of Mexican valor, continuing to range the country for horses and supplies as though no enemy had crossed the Rio Grande.

Even as these scattered commands dawdled the days away, each of the leaders fancying himself a Hannibal, a Mexican force was marching for their destruction. Before entering Texas, Santa Anna had detached General José Urrea from the main army, and sent him by way of Matamoros for the purpose of at-

Sam Houston

tacking Goliad and the near-by settlements. It was this division, fully one thousand strong, that rode across the southern prairies while the dictator marched against the Alamo.

Urrea came before San Patricio on February 27, and made successful assault under cover of a furious storm. Captain Johnson and three companions managed to escape, but twenty-four others were captured and put in front of a firing squad. Dr. Grant was away at the time, horse-raiding down on the Agua Dulce, and Urrea prepared an ambush and placidly waited for the victims to walk into it. His patience was rewarded on March 2, when Grant and forty men rode by the islands of timber in which the Mexicans lurked. All forty were either killed in the fight, or else shot after their capture, the one exception being Dr. Grant himself. A particular object of hate, he was tied to the tail and heels of a wild horse.

The San Patricio contingent duly disposed of, Urrea now marched away in the direction of Goliad where reckless Fannin derided the idea that Mexicans would ever dare to attack. Fannin's confidence, as a matter of fact, was not without good ground, for his force numbered close to five hundred men, mostly volunteer companies from the United States, all well armed and fully equipped. News of the San Patricio disaster caused him distress, but no particular alarm, and when scouts reported Urrea's advance, he proceeded to dissipate his strength instead of concentrat-

Sam Houston

ing it. First he sent Captain King and twenty-eight Georgians on a wild-goose chase to Refugio, and when word came that Urrea had attacked them, Lieutenant-Colonel Ward and 120 men were dispatched as an adequate relief force.

Ward, joining King in the old mission on the night of March 13, decided upon a retreat, but before the order could be carried out, Urrea's main body came up, and completed the investment. King, leading a scouting party of thirteen men, was cut off, and all fourteen were tied to trees, riddled with bullets and then left for the vultures. Ward, although beaten back in his dash to King's rescue, managed to regain the mission, and all through the 14th, his little band held an army at bay. Nightfall, however, found them without food and without ammunition, and nothing remained but the chance of cutting a way through the Mexican lines. Miraculously enough, the desperate effort succeeded, and gaining the safety of the swamps, Ward and his band floundered off in the hope of reaching Victoria.

Fannin received Houston's order for evacuation on the 14th, but he would not desert King and Ward, yet when he learned of their fate on the 17th, it was still the case that he made no move to carry out his superior's instructions. On the morning of the 18th, his scouts reported Urrea's advance in force, but it was not until the 19th that he finally made up his mind to retreat. Even so, haste and intelligence could have

Sam Houston

saved him then, but the garrison set out for Victoria burdened down with heavy artillery and ox-drawn wagons, and by noon only seven miles had been traveled. Nor was this the full extent of folly, for with the woods of Coletto Creek only three miles away, affording ample cover, Fannin halted his caravan in order that the cattle might graze. As if to omit no detail of recklessness, not only did he pitch camp in the open prairie, but in a basin.

Urrea, as incompetent as Fannin was careless, had been meandering about the countryside all this time, but the many delays gave him time to come up just as the oxen were being hitched for a fresh start. Now moving frantically enough, Fannin tried to get out of the basin, but some wagons broke down before the hill was reached, and he was forced to give battle with all the odds of position against him. Three times that afternoon the Mexicans charged in full force, and three times they were beaten back with heavy loss, for Fannin, despite his foolhardiness, had a genius for dynamic leadership.

A company of Maya Indians from Yucatan did far more damage than the Mexicans, crawling through the high grass like snakes, and pouring in a deadly fire at close range. Captain Duval, a famous marksman, was assigned to take care of these snipers, and in a very short while the nuisance was abated. After the battle, five Indians were found in grass tufts, each with a bullet through the head.

Sam Houston

Harry Ripley, the nineteen-year-old son of the Governor of Louisiana, had his thigh shattered by a bullet in the very first part of the engagement. Calling one of the Texas women to his assistance, he had himself propped up in a wagon, and as loaded rifles were passed to him, fired as coolly as though at a target. Four Mexicans fell before his aim, and when another ball tore through his arm, he turned and said, "You can take me down now, mother. I reckon I've done my share."

When night fell, however, the Texans were able to take small joy in victory. All of the artillery was out of commission, the rifle ammunition was running low, and worst of all, the provision wagons had been left behind in the dash for the hill, dooming the band to hunger and thirst. There was a fair chance for them to get through the Mexican lines and gain the timber on the Coletto, but sixty men had been wounded, forty of them badly disabled. All knew what their fate would be if abandoned, and without one dissenting voice, it was agreed to stand and fight to the death.

As for Fannin, not even a bullet through the hip had power to chill his bravery, and in full confidence of victory he hobbled about through the darkness, preparing for next day's battle. The wagon ring was tightened, and further strengthened by the bodies of the dead oxen and such earthworks as the exhausted men were able to spade up. What little water remained was given to the wounded, and the rest com-

Sam Houston

forted themselves with the gay assurance that they would wait and wine and dine at Urrea's expense.

When dawn broke, however, powerful reenforcements were seen entering Urrea's camp, and the artillery of the newcomers soon tore the wagon ring into pieces. Before an hour, Fannin's ammunition was exhausted, and without food or water, further resistance became madness. Fannin pleaded with his men to fight on, but the majority agreed upon surrender if proper terms could be secured. A white flag was run up, and as a consequence of the parleys that followed, it was pledged that the Texans should be received and treated as prisoners of war, "according to the usages of the most civilized nations."

The prisoners were marched to Goliad and lodged in the old mission of La Bahia, and there they soon had company, for one day later, Colonel Ward and his one hundred men were brought in. After escaping from Refugio on the 14th, they had waded through the swamps to Victoria, only to find the Mexicans in possession. A week without food had made them staggering skeletons, and when a party of Mexicans came upon them, they were happy enough to surrender as prisoners of war. Still another addition was a force of eighty-two volunteers from Nashville, under command of Major Miller, captured as they landed at Copano. Estimated roughly, about 450 men were in the prison of La Bahia when an order arrived from Santa Anna for their execution.

Sam Houston

Not in all the history of warfare is there record of a slaughter more inhuman than that of Goliad. The garrison of the Alamo, at least, had been killed in battle, but Fannin and his men were the victims of a cold-blooded, deliberate butchery. It was not only that they had surrendered as prisoners of war, under written guarantee that their lives would be spared, but until the very last they were kept in ignorance of their fate, and deluded with false promises. On the 26th, the day that Santa Anna's orders came, wounded, hobbling Fannin and a Mexican officer had returned from Copano with the news that a vessel would soon be procured to take them home. Even when led out in the morning to be shot down, the prisoners were assured that they were on the way to release, and laughed and shouted like children.

Urrea had left Goliad several days before, and the officers and men in charge were the poor, ignorant Indians from Yucatan. Conscripted by force, and treated with savage cruelty, all were in terror of Santa Anna and his rages, yet even these beaten, submissive creatures felt horror at the order of execution. The following excerpt from the diary of Colonel Juan Portilla, the officer in command, admirably expresses the general feeling:

March 26, 1836—At seven o'clock in the evening arrived a courier extraordinary from Bexar, from his Excellency General Santa Anna, notifying me that the whole of the prisoners who had

Sam Houston

surrendered by force of arms were immediately to be shot, with regulations as to the manner in which it was to be executed. I deferred it, for both myself and Colonel Garay, to whom I communicated it, thought of nothing less than such a thing. At eight the same evening came a courier extraordinary from Victoria, from General Urrea, who said to me, among other things, "Treat the prisoners with consideration, and particularly their leader Fannin. Let them be employed in repairing the houses, and erecting quarters, and serve out to them a portion of rations which you will receive from the mission of Refugio." How cruel is my state of uncertainty, my mind vacillating between these conflicting orders! I passed the whole night restless and uneasy in mind.

By the next morning, however—Palm Sunday—distracted Portilla had come to the conclusion that he must obey Santa Anna; the prisoners were formed into three divisions and marched out of town. To the accompaniment of a solitary flute, the Americans sang "Home Sweet Home," but suddenly the Indians swung a few feet to one side of the marching columns, and opened a deadly fire. Such of the unarmed men as were not killed outright met death at the hands of the lancers, who went from body to body, stabbing as methodically as though they were planting corn.

Incredible as it may seem, twenty-seven men escaped death in the prairie massacre, some by sheer swiftness of foot, others by feigning death and holding to im-

Sam Houston

mobility even when a lance was driven through the breast. Managing to gain and cross the San Antonio River, they found safety in the forest, and finally reached other settlements after terrible suffering. Major Miller and the eighty-two men in his command were also spared, Colonel Garay insisting that they had not been taken in the field, and the same noble officer concealed two surgeons in his tent. Señora Alvarez, the wife of one of Urrea's aides, also assisted in the work of mercy, hiding as many as she could in her house. Fannin and Ward were not included in the general slaughter, but were shot later in the day. When placed in front of a firing squad, the two commanders requested only that they might be given decent burial, but even this poor favor was denied them. As at the Alamo, the bodies of the dead were burned in one great heap, and Fannin and Ward were thrown upon the pile. Not until three months later did General Rusk come by to gather up the charred bones that had been picked by vultures and gnawed by coyotes.

There can be no question that the butchery of La Bahia was a deliberate and barbarous violation of pledged faith. Dr. John Shackelford, captain of the Alabama Red Rovers, and one of the surgeons saved by Colonel Garay, afterwards made this affidavit:

When he [Fannin] was about to leave our lines, the emotions of my mind were intense, and I felt some anxiety to hear the determination of

Sam Houston

the men. I remarked to him that I would not oppose a surrender, provided we could obtain an honorable capitulation—one on which he could rely; that if he could not obtain such, “come back—our graves are already dug—let us all be buried together!”

To these remarks the men responded in a firm and determined manner, and the Colonel assured us that he never would surrender on any other terms. He returned in a short time thereafter, and communicated the substance of an agreement entered into by General Urrea and himself. Colonel Holzinger, a German, and an engineer in the Mexican service, together with several other officers, then came into our lines to consummate the arrangement. The first words Colonel Holzinger uttered, after a very polite bow, were, “Well, gentlemen, in eight days, liberty and home!”

I heard this distinctly. The terms of the capitulation were then written in both the English and Mexican languages, and read two or three times by officers who could speak and read both languages. The instruments which embodied the terms of capitulation as agreed on were then signed and interchanged in the most formal and solemn manner, and were in substance as follows:

1. That we should be received and treated as prisoners of war, according to the usages of the most civilized nations.
2. That private property should be respected

Sam Houston

and restored; that the side-arms of the officers should be given up.

3. That the men should be sent to Copano, and thence to the United States in eight days, or so soon thereafter as vessels could be procured to take them.

4. That the officers should be paroled, and return to the United States in like manner.

I assert most positively that this capitulation was entered into, without which a surrender never would have been made.

Urrea asserted that the surrender had been unconditional, and that he had given no other assurance than that he would interpose with Santa Anna in behalf of the prisoners. He claimed to have done this by letter from Victoria, and declared that he was "struck to the heart with sorrow" when word came of the massacre. At a later period, however, when he was no longer in fear of Santa Anna's wrath, he made this confession:

"Nothing could be more painful to me than the idea of sacrificing so many gallant men, and particularly the amiable, spirited, and soldierlike Fannin. They certainly surrendered in the full confidence that Mexican generosity would not be sterile in their regard; they assuredly did so, or otherwise they would have resisted to the last, and sold their lives as dearly as possible."

Sam Houston

The number of men shot down in the open, together with the wounded who were butchered in their beds, was 330, to which must be added King and his 28 Georgians, massacred at San Refugio, and the San Patricio death list of 65, a ghastly total of 423. Truly a terrible price to have paid for reckless insubordination.

[XIII]

HOUSTON'S VALLEY FORGE

PETER KERR'S story of Fannin's capture, told in whispers, buried Houston in brooding thought until the dawn broke. Kerr had fled before the massacre, but there was little doubt as to the fate of Fannin and his men. The Alamo had shown the quality of Santa Anna's mercy, and as though the tragedy were being enacted before his eyes, Houston saw the butchery of the prisoners. Travis and Bowie gone with all their gallant company, and now the complete annihilation of all those ardent youths from the United States whose aid had promised so much! A deeper despair for the people of Texas, an exaggeration of panic.

What was he to do? He could cross the river and possibly crush Sesma, but what then? Would it not lead Santa Anna to concentrate his entire force for an overwhelming reprisal? Outnumbered four to one, and without artillery, the little Texas army would be blown aside as by a whirlwind, and from the Colorado to the eastern border, the country would lie helpless

Sam Houston

under the feet of the invader. It was a risk he dared not take, for better than any other, he knew that the annihilation of his small force meant the end of the rebellion, if not the extermination of every Anglo-Saxon.

The alternative? Might it not be that a retreat would lull Santa Anna into false security, thus inducing an indulgence in those crack-brained follies for which the dictator was justly famous? Certainly the one hope lay in having the Mexican army divide itself, and in luring these divisions into the interior, far from the base of supplies. Once separated, and in a country that he knew as he knew the palm of his hand, Houston felt confident of his ability to deal with them in detail. At least it was a plan that held bright promise for success, while to stand and fight could have no other ultimate than disaster. So he made his decision by the side of the dying fire, alone and unaided.

When the announcement was made next morning that the army would fall back to the Brazos, the rage of the volunteers went close to mutiny. They had come to fight, and fight they would. Houston met the anger of his men by a grim reiteration of purpose, giving no explanation whatever for the very good reason that he knew the reckless Texans would refuse to look beyond the hour. What followed was a clash of wills between the commander and the troops, and Houston's true greatness was never more fully proved

Sam Houston

than when the volunteers turned away and sullenly struck their tents.

The retreat itself was not of a nature to soothe embittered spirits. Day and night the rain beat down, turning every creek into a torrent and the prairie into a vast morass. No one saw Houston sleep, and not a man of them all labored more hugely, for when wagons bogged or oxen mired, he was the first to throw his mighty shoulder into the rescue. He was sympathetic, persuasive, good-humored; there was no art of fellowship that he did not employ to win the soldiers to cheerfulness, and slowly but surely they were shamed into the old obedience, belief and comradeship. It was a true word that Houston wrote to Rusk when he said, "The fame of Jackson could never compensate me for my anxiety and mental pain."

When they reached San Felipe, on the west bank of the Brazos, Houston's decision to march up the river brought on a violent recurrence of the insubordination that had nearly disrupted the army on the Colorado. Captain Moseley Baker, backed by 120 men, insisted that the one intelligent course was to remain on the spot for the defense of the San Felipe crossing, while Captain Wylie Martin, with forty-six men, defied superior authority, and went down the river to guard the ferry at Fort Bend. Ignoring the mutiny that he was powerless to punish, Houston took the five hundred volunteers that remained loyal to him, and led them up the river in accordance with his

Sam Houston

plan of campaign. From his camp at Mill Creek, in a dispatch written on March 29, the harassed commander poured out his heart to Secretary Rusk:

On my arrival on the Brazos, had I consulted the wishes of all, I should have been like the ass between two stacks of hay. Many wished me to go below, others above. I consulted none—I held no councils of war. If I err, the blame is mine. For Heaven’s sake, do not drop back again with the seat of government! Your removal to Harrisburg has done more to increase the panic in the country than anything else that has occurred in Texas, except the fall of the Alamo.

Where was Santa Anna? It was vital for Houston to know, and after sending off “Deaf” Smith and other scouts, camp was pitched in the Brazos bottom, a spot that became the Valley Forge of Texas. The rain fell in solid sheets, the river rose until the camp was an island, the only food was such cattle as the hunters were able to kill, and all the while rumor-mongers sped here and there, carrying tales of Santa Anna’s advance and new massacres. Moseley Baker, deceived by a crazy report, actually set fire to San Felipe, and Secretary of the Navy Carson, writing to President Burnet from Liberty, painted this gloomy picture of a people’s terror:

The panic has reached this place, and the people are all leaving Trinity from the opposite

Sam Houston

(west) side, and preparations making by many on this. The river is rising rapidly, and I fear by tonight it will be impassable for any kind of carriage. The "slues" on this side are belly-deep. There must be three hundred families—I know not the number of wagons, carts, carriages, etc. Destruction pervades the whole country. Never till I reached Trinity have I desponded—I will not say, despaired. If Houston has retreated, or been whipped, nothing can save the people from themselves: their own conduct has brought this calamity on them! If Houston retreats the flying people may be covered in their escape. He must be advised of the state of the waters, and the impossibility of the people crossing.

Black and blacker grew the clouds that lowered above Houston's head. Austin, Archer and Wharton, the commissioners to the United States, had been able to borrow only \$70,000 in cash, and this poor amount was now gone; no artillery had come nor had the promised reinforcements been received; his army consisted of some 750 effectives, and against him marched a force of 6,000. There was no longer hope of aid from the United States, for President Jackson had not only issued a proclamation of neutrality, but was enforcing it.

Old Hickory's views on the Texas rebellion, which he was to be accused of fomenting, were expressed in the following notation on a piteous letter addressed to him by Stephen Austin: "The writer does not reflect

Sam Houston

that we have a treaty with Mexico and our national faith is pledged to support it. The Texans, before they took the step to declare themselves independent, which has aroused and united all Mexico against them, ought to have pondered well—it was a rash and premature act; our neutrality must be faithfully maintained.”

A gloomy outlook indeed, well calculated to depress, but it was a peculiarity of Houston’s temperament that his spirits were highest when the hour was darkest, and not a soldier of his command was privileged to witness a droop in his proud crest. A cheering circumstance was the arrival of Vice-President Zavala and Secretary of War Rusk, both disgusted with the cowardice of the fugitive government, for the coming of these indomitable souls brought cheer to the men and comfort to Houston. Another ray of light was authoritative news with respect to Santa Anna.

After the capture of Fannin’s force, the dictator felt that the back of the rebellion had been broken, and prepared to return to Mexico, leaving it to his subordinates to deliver the finishing blows. Sesma, then on the Colorado, was to go to Anahuac on the coast, marching by way of San Felipe and Harrisburg; Urrea was directed to lay waste the country between Goliad and Matagorda, at the mouth of the Brazos; and Gaona, with a strong command, was ordered to Nacogdoches by way of Tenoxtitlan, a route far to the north.

Sam Houston

Sesma, however, sent back a frantic cry from the Colorado, saying that Houston was in front of him with a large army, and this news caused Santa Anna to change his plans. Colonel Amat was rushed forward with reenforcements for Sesma, and orders were sent to Gaona in the north, and to Urrea in the south, to march straight for San Felipe. It was exactly as Houston had foreseen, and had he given battle to Sesma, he would have found an augmented force in front of him, and Gaona and Urrea at his back.

When Santa Anna heard of Houston's retreat, he straightway dismissed the Texas army as unworthy of further consideration, and committed the very stupidities that Houston had counted upon. Gaona was left to reach San Felipe as best as he could without guides or supplies, Urrea was now instructed to follow out his original orders, ravaging the country from Victoria to Brazoria, while Santa Anna himself suddenly decided to take charge of the "campaign of extermination."

The dictator reached Gonzales on April 2 to find Amat and his five hundred sitting helplessly on the banks of the Guadalupe, so swollen by spring rains that there were no fords. Leaving General Filisola behind to superintend the building of rafts, Santa Anna hurried ahead with a company of dragoons. On the 5th he crossed the Colorado and on the 6th he caught up with Sesma. On the 7th, San Felipe was entered, and finding the town in ashes, Santa Anna

Sam Houston

naturally concluded that organized resistance was at an end.

Even as he expressed his contempt for "Houston and his cowards," who ran with the speed of "mule-eared rabbits," the dictator had a brilliant idea. He would capture the government at Harrisburg, thus providing the campaign with a dramatic finale! On the 9th, therefore, he marched down the Brazos to Fort Bend. A series of feints engaged the attention of Captain Martin and his bold defenders, permitting Santa Anna and the army to cross leisurely and uninterruptedly at another point, and with Harrisburg only forty miles away, the dictator prepared for a dash. Taking a picked body of infantry and dragoons, he marched off, saying that he would return in three days, and ordering Sesma to wait for Filisola, then nearing the Brazos.

When "Deaf" Smith brought word that Santa Anna was entering San Felipe, Houston felt that the time had come to strike. Weariness and depression fell from him, and it was with a return of his old fire that he dictated the following orders to the army: "The advance of the enemy is at San Felipe. The moment for which we have waited with anxiety and interest is fast approaching. The victims of the Alamo, and the manes of those who were murdered at Goliad, call for cool, deliberate vengeance. Strict discipline, order and subordination will insure us the victory."

Sam Houston

It had been his purpose to attack at once, but fresh floods prevented. Three deep creeks lay between him and San Felipe, all running bank high, and he was without boats. Even as Houston cursed the rains, "Deaf" Smith reported that the Mexicans had crossed the Brazos at Fort Bend, and this compelled a radical reconstruction of plans. Deciding to follow Santa Anna, Houston impressed the Yellowstone, a small steamboat, and by the 13th had transferred his entire command to the east bank.

With the exception of Rusk and Zavala, Houston was without friends in the government. Burnet, the president, had always resented the giant Tennessean's imperial air, and particularly were he and his cabinet enraged by Houston's strictures on their having fled from Washington. The retreat of the Texas army seemed to afford good opportunity for retaliation, and while Houston was in the midst of moving his troops to the east bank, the following letter was handed to him from the Acting Secretary of War at Harrisburg:

There are a number of families here and in the neighborhood, who came here under the belief that they would be safe, who are now exposed to the attack of the enemy. You have assured the government that the enemy should never cross the Brazos; they have relied on your assurance, but they find your pledges not verified, and numberless families exposed to the ravages of the enemy.

Sam Houston

The country expects something from you; the government looks to you for action. The time has now arrived to determine whether we are to give up the country, and make the best of our way out of it, or to meet the enemy, and make at least one struggle for our boasted independence. The government does not intend to control your movements; but it is expected that, without delay, you will take measures to check those of the enemy.

Sitting down at once, Houston penned this answer:

*Headquarters, Camp at Groce's,
April 13, 1836.*

SIR:

This moment yours of yesterday reached me. I have the honor to remark that taunts and suggestions have been gratuitously tendered to me; and I have submitted to them without any disposition to retort either unkindness or imputation. What has been my situation? At Gonzales, I had three hundred and seventy-four efficient men, without supplies, even powder, balls or arms. At Colorado with seven hundred men, without discipline or time to organize the army. Two days since, my effective force in camp was five hundred and twenty-three men (aggregate). . . . I beg leave to assure you that I will omit no opportunity to serve the country and to serve it for the love of it. I have under the most disadvantageous circumstances kept an army together . . . but I cannot perform impossibilities.

Sam Houston

Wylie Martin and Moseley Baker, who had rejoined the army, now proceeded to make their contributions to irritation and confusion. Did Houston mean to fight, and if so, when? The commander answered that it was his purpose to give battle as soon as the enemy could be brought to bay, but Baker and Martin proceeded to show so ugly and mutinous a temper that he was forced to let the latter go his own way, while still another company had to be disbanded. This depletion of his strength necessitated a call for volunteers, and Houston, turning to the composition of a battle-cry, sent out couriers with this appeal to the citizens of Texas:

You have suffered panic to seize you, and idle rumor to guide you. You will now be told that the enemy have crossed the Brazos, and that Texas is conquered. Reflect, reason with yourselves, and you cannot believe a part of it. The enemy have crossed the Brazos, but they are treading the soil on which they are to be conquered. That he has not already been beaten, has been caused by the tardiness of some, and the apathy of others. The force of the enemy does not exceed nine hundred men. With a semblance of force sufficient to meet him, his fate is certain. If then, you wish your country saved, join her standard. Protect your wives, your children and your homes, by repairing to the field, where alone, by discipline and concert of action, you can be effective. The presence of the small force now in

Sam Houston

the field has divided his army. Our spies have once checked his career. Then march forward; and with the confidence of men determined to conquer, join the troops now in the field, and your enemy is certainly in your power. . . . Let those who are on the march, advance to the army. Those who do not aid Texas in her present struggle, but flee and forfeit all the rights of citizens, will deserve their fate.

Only waiting a night to rest his exhausted men, Houston marched forward, no longer the hunted but the hunter, and as the rain-soaked, ragged volunteers realized that at last "Old Sam" was taking the aggressive, a great cheer rang out, every man as confident of victory as though their hundreds had been thousands. Never was courage needed more, for now followed days of heart-breaking toil, every mile of the way a struggle.

There were fourteen baggage wagons, and such was the swampy condition of the prairie that they bogged regularly and had to be unloaded. There were also two pieces of artillery, received the day before as a gift from the citizens of Cincinnati, and the Twin Sisters, as they were christened, mired with such frequency that they were carried most of the time. As always, Houston was the first to strip his coat, and when the men saw their commander drudging knee deep in the mud, and sleeping on the ground at night

Sam Houston

without cover from the drenching rain, the soldiers endured without complaint.

Fifty-two miles—from Donoho's to a point on Buffalo Bayou near Harrisburg—the Texans made in two and a half days, and that through a morass. Even before camp was pitched, "Deaf" Smith swam the stream, and returned late that night, herding two Mexican couriers before him. As he entered camp, however, his usually cheerful face wore an expression of intense irritation, and no sooner had he appeared before Houston than he gave vent to a bitter complaint.

"It's all right fightin' civilized," he said, sufficiently moved for once to break his habitual silence, "an' I don't mind it often, but what are you to do when you meet *two* couriers? By the time I get one tied up the other is so far off that I'm worn out chasin' him. I don't want to be insubordinate, Gen'ral, but I do wish you'd let me manage things my own way."

The ink was hardly dry on the captured dispatches, and the contents gave full information as to the movements of the Mexicans. After leaving Sesma, Santa Anna had raced for Harrisburg at full speed, and only the vigilance of a Negro herder had prevented him from carrying out his plan of bagging the entire government. In his rage and disappointment, the dictator set fire to the town, and then ran his men to New Washington on Galveston Bay, figuring that he

Sam Houston

might yet trap the fleeing president and his cabinet. Again the margin of escape was slim, for Burnet and his family were in rifle shot of the shore when the Mexicans poured into the town.

Santa Anna had not thought beyond this point, but after a night of deliberation, the 18th found him deciding to carry the war beyond Galveston Bay. According to his reports, Houston and the Texan army were still in camp on the Brazos, seventy-five miles away, and he felt no fear from that quarter. With nothing to worry him but the mud and flies, therefore, he dispatched a messenger to Sesma, telling him to send forward General Cos with five hundred men.

Houston and Rush, studying the disposition of the enemy, could not contain their exultation. Santa Anna was in New Washington with twelve hundred men, Sesma and Filisola were twiddling their thumbs at Fort Bend, under orders to await the dictator's return, Urrea was at Matagorda, far to the south, and nothing seemed to be known of Gaona except that he was wandering in the wilderness north of San Felipe. A more perfect dissipation of strength could not have been desired, and what was even better, Santa Anna's witless gyrations had carried him into a natural cul de sac.

New Washington was cut off from the east by the broad sweep of Galveston Bay; on the north there was Buffalo Bayou, a swift, deep stream that entered into the San Jacinto River, and on the south and west were

Sam Houston

numerous creeks without fords or bridges. Two avenues of escape from the pocket were open to him, and only two. Either he could march up to Lynch's Ferry, at the junction of Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto, and cross to the eastern side of the bay, or else he would have to return to Sesma by the Harrisburg road, thus running head on into the Texas army.

Lynch's Ferry, therefore, was Houston's one concern. He must win the race to that point, else Santa Anna would pass over to the eastern shore, capturing Galveston and Anahuac. It was his sure conviction, however, that the irresponsible dictator would dawdle along, without any realization of his danger, and at thought of coming to grips with the butcher of the Alamo and Goliad, all that was fierce and implacable in Houston flamed to the surface.

"We have them, Rusk!" he cried, beating his huge fist against the pine board that was the table. "We have them!"

[XIV]

SAN JACINTO

AT BREAK of dawn on the 19th, preparations began for crossing Buffalo Bayou, a dangerous undertaking, for the stream ran 350 feet wide and fifteen feet deep, and there was but one poor boat. With his own hands, Houston took oak rails and cut them into oars, superintended the stretching of horse-hair ropes from bank to bank, and then made the first trip in the leaky craft, swimming his mount behind him. As he stood on the opposite bank, however, even his Indian stoicism could not conceal anxiety, for not only was there the fear that the boat would not stand the strain, but any moment might bring a Mexican attack while the little army was still divided. It was during these trying hours that he drew a pencil from his pocket, and scribbled this memorandum, feeling that they might well be his last words:

This morning we are in preparation to meet Santa Anna. It is the only chance of saving Texas. From time to time I have looked for reinforcements in vain. The Convention's adjourning to Harrisburg struck panic throughout the

Sam Houston

country. Texas could have started at least four thousand men. We will only be about seven hundred to march, besides the camp guard. But we go to conquest. It is wisdom growing out of necessity to meet and fight the enemy now. Every consideration enforces it. The troops are in fine spirits, and now is the time for action. We will use our best efforts to fight the enemy to such advantage as will insure victory, though the odds are greatly against us. I leave the result in the hands of an all-wise God, and I rely confidently upon His providence. My country will do justice to those who serve her. The right for which we fight will be secured, and Texas shall be free.

Despite frequent accidents, the frail craft held together, but it was approaching sundown before the last man landed, and the horses of the cavalry had been towed across. The sick had been left behind, together with the baggage wagons, and with speed as a grim necessity, Houston drove his volunteers across the prairie until even the strongest reeled from exhaustion. A short rest, and again the march was resumed, with no further halt until the San Jacinto came in sight at sunrise. "Deaf" Smith was sent forward at once, and he returned with the glad news that there were no signs of Santa Anna at Lynch's Ferry. Houston had won the race.

Fires were kindled and some beef cattle killed, but even as the famished Texans grabbed at the half-cooked meat, an outpost rushed in with word that the

Sam Houston

Mexican army was in sight. Straightway there was a swift march to the ferry, but the alarm proved a false one, although the swoop was rewarded by the capture of a flatboat well loaded with Mexican provisions. With the men shouting like schoolboys as they towed the prize behind them, Houston now went back along the bayou for half a mile, and pitched his camp in a live-oak grove.

The position was admirably chosen. A bluff, twenty feet high, and with a gradual descent to the water, provided the Texans with natural earthworks, while in front lay a stretch of open prairie, broken only by two islands of timber. On his left, extending to the south, were the marshes of the San Jacinto, while swift-running creeks shielded his right. Proudly enough the Twin Sisters were placed at the edge of the timber, and beside the two guns were piled the broken horseshoes that were to serve as ammunition. When Houston went to his tent, he was justified in the feeling that he had obeyed the admonition of the Duke of Schomburg, "A great general never fights until he gets ready, and always chooses his battle-ground."

Strategy, however, was not the concern of the troops. The great majority were scarce more than boys—the average age of the 783 volunteers was twenty—and they had not eaten since the previous morning. Willing hands lighted the fires again, and from Santa Anna's captured boat came salt and flour and even sugar, the first the youngsters had seen in

Sam Houston

weeks. Bread was cooked in tin cups, strips of bleeding beef broiled on bayonets, and as joyously as though they were not facing a deadly encounter that might cost them their lives, the Texans feasted.

While Houston was thus preparing for battle, Santa Anna loafed in New Washington, setting fire to various buildings and otherwise diverting himself. When his scouts rushed in with word that Texas troops were at Lynch's Ferry, an alarm spread that the town was about to be attacked, whereupon the dictator, with his usual lively sense of self-preservation, dug in his spurs and tore madly through soldiers and baggage trains in a dash for safety.

Convinced that Houston was on the Brazos, seventy-five miles away, Santa Anna thought that the Texas force at the ferry had come from the east. Assured that it was only a small body of troops, not half the number of his own command, the dictator's courage returned, and he panted for battle. Marching forward he swung into the prairie facing Houston's position shortly after noon, and opened fire with a brass twelve-pounder. He attempted to follow it up by a brisk infantry attack, but the Twin Sisters discouraged this, and Santa Anna decided to fall back and wait for the arrival of General Cos with reinforcements.

The camp site selected had the marshes of the San Jacinto at its right and rear, and a boggy bayou on the left, but Santa Anna stormed down all intelligent sug-

Sam Houston

gestion. In his diary, Colonel Delgado tells that he protested to General Castrillon, pointing out the criminal stupidity of the selection, but the Spaniard shrugged and said: "What can I do? I know it well, but I cannot help it. Nothing avails here against the caprice, arbitrary will and ignorance of that man."

The Texans, elated by the withdrawal of the Mexicans, were keyed to battle pitch, and waited eagerly for the word to charge, and bitter was the feeling when Houston did not give it. For years this failure to fight on the afternoon of the 20th stood as a favorite attack, although every fact in the case, as well as the results, supported him. Always uncanny in his accurate estimation of the mental and emotional processes of his fellows, Houston had made a careful study of Santa Anna and felt that he knew him. At every point the dictator was revealed as a creature of fits and starts, his feverish activities invariably followed by sodden lethargies. Undoubtedly he had advanced in confident expectation of battle, with every quivering nerve strung for it, and the same was probably true of his men. Delay would likely bring about a let-down, and twenty-four hours of inaction and apprehension might well render the Mexican force fifty per cent less effective.

These conclusions, however, he kept to himself, for keeping his own counsel was Houston's passion. Behind it, undoubtedly, was the feeling that inasmuch as he had the responsibility he was entitled to the exercise

Sam Houston

of full authority, but a large amount of vanity was also mixed in, for he dearly loved the Atlas attitude. As the day slipped by without orders of any kind, the young Texans milled like restless cattle, and there were those in camp that did their best to fan the flames of incipient rebellion. One James H. Perry, assigned to staff duty with Houston at the request of a cabinet member, had been a spy and mischief-maker from the first, and Colonel Sidney Sherman held firmly to the belief that he was the man to lead the Texas army.

Mutterings became louder and louder, and in the late afternoon, Sherman demanded that he be allowed to make a reconnaissance with the cavalry. Deeming it a harmless vent for energy, Houston consented, but gave positive orders that there must be no contact with the enemy. The ambitious Sherman, however, dreaming of military glory, and eager to prove Houston a laggard, dashed forward with full intent to bring on a battle, and ran head on into Santa Anna's infantry fire, followed by a cavalry charge. At the first sound of shots, Houston suspected that his orders had been disobeyed, and rushed infantry and the Twin Sisters to the rescue. The Mexicans, convinced that it was an attack in force, quickly retired to a defensive position, and Sherman was brought back to safety, a chastened if not a wiser man.

"I do not doubt that we would have won today," Houston confided that night to Major Hockley, "but

Sam Houston

our loss would have been heavy, while tomorrow I will conquer, slaughter or put to flight the entire Mexican army, and it shall not cost me a dozen of my brave men."

As darkness fell, Houston threw out a double guard and ordered officers and men to take rest of which all were in such sore need. For himself, he kept vigil until four o'clock, when he sounded reveille by giving three taps on the drum. Only then did he lie down, a coil of artillery rope for a pillow, and snatch a few hours of repose while the camp made ready for breakfast. It was his usual custom, instituted on the first day of the campaign and continued until the last, yet no man ever heard him confess exhaustion.

At nine o'clock, a body of Mexican troops was seen coming over the prairie from the north, and the cry arose that Santa Anna was being joined by Sesma and Filisola. As it afterwards developed, the new arrivals were General Cos and his five hundred men, but Houston scoffed at the idea of reenforcements, insisting that the Mexican army was merely being marched back and forth, and urged the men not to be deceived by a trick. Whether calmed by the assurance, or careless of the numbers against them, the Texans went back to the business of putting their rifles in order, but as the morning wore away without further incident, again unrest and impatience became general.

By noon the officers, spurred on by the insistence of the men, asked for a council of war. Houston con-

Sam Houston

sented willingly enough, and an hour was given over to vigorous discussion as to whether the aggressive should be taken, or whether it was better to let Santa Anna begin the battle. Two of the six field officers were strongly in favor of an immediate assault, but the four seniors opposed, and Secretary Rusk supported them with the declaration that "to attack veteran troops with raw militia is a thing unheard of; to charge upon the enemy without bayonets in the open prairie has never been known; our position is strong; in it we can whip all Mexico."

Houston spoke no word throughout the council, and when all had been said, dismissed his officers without any expression of his own opinion. No sooner had they left the tent, however, than he sent for "Deaf" Smith, and told him to choose a companion, provide himself with axes, ride to Vince's Creek, and destroy the bridge. Smith's leathery face broke into a happy smile, and as he turned to go, he chuckled, "Looks a good deal like a fight, don't it?" Vince's Bridge, eight miles to the north, was on the one road that led to the Brazos. Both Houston and Santa Anna had crossed it to enter the pocket formed by Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto, and its destruction meant that the battle must be fought on both sides without hope of retreat.

At half past three, when the Texans were beginning to gather in sullen groups, Houston summoned his officers and told them to parade their respective commands. Quietly announcing that he meant to attack,

Sam Houston

he assigned Colonel Sherman to command on the left wing, placed Colonel Millard in charge on the right, and gave the center to Colonel Burleson. The Twin Sisters, under special command of Major Hockley, took station between Burleson and Millard, and the cavalry, under Colonel Mirabeau Lamar, rode on the extreme right. At four o'clock, Houston put himself in front of his army, mounted on his big white horse, and gave the order to advance.

Never in military history was there a more tatterdemalion army or a more dilapidated leader. The men were in rags, and gone was the barbaric dandyism that Houston's Indian soul so loved. A stained and torn black coat hung from his shoulders, disreputable snuff-colored breeches were stuffed into equally disreputable boots, and his badge of command was a sword belted about his middle with buckskin thongs. Yet as he turned in his saddle, his face full to the afternoon sun, and looked back at his rabble of boys, not Napoleon's eyes ever mirrored greater pride at sight of the Grenadier Guard.

The islands of timber masked the first stages of the advance, but when the Texans swung clear, the one fife and solitary drum struck up, "Come to the Bower I Have Shaded for You," the only tune the players knew, and the Twin Sisters, bumping forward, crashed their broken horseshoes into the Mexican camp. Calling to his men to hold their fire until each rifle could pick its man, Houston sank home his spurs.

Sam Houston

At that moment "Deaf" Smith dashed up, his horse white with foam, yelling that Vince's Bridge had been cut down, and like tigers the Texans leaped to the death grapple, their battle-cry, "Remember the Alamo!"

The Mexicans had given up all thought of an attack, Santa Anna himself being fast asleep,¹ and although Almonte and Castrillon managed to herd a number of soldiers behind the flimsy breastworks, their volleys were scattered and aimless. A few shots answered from the charging line, but Houston's bellow reminded the men of his orders. "Hold your fire," he cried. "God damn you, hold your fire."

Not until they were at pointblank range did the Texans pull trigger, and the wretched Mexicans were laid in windrows as though some giant scythe had been swung. There was no reloading; rifles were clubbed and used as flails, and skulls cracked like eggshells

¹ Santa Anna, in his manifesto, handled this unfortunate fact as follows: "All I can be responsible for is physical debility, for after having marched the whole of the previous day, and spent the night in watching, and the morning on horseback, I yielded to repose, which I was unfortunately induced to prolong in consequence of the delay of General Cos's troops. As general-in-chief, I had fulfilled my duty, by disposing everything on the field, and issuing the necessary orders; as a man, I yielded to the unsurmountable necessity of nature, which cannot, I think, be charged as a crime against any general, or me—much less when it took place at mid-day, underneath a tree, and in the camp itself; as proof that I did not abandon myself immoderately to that which, after all, is but a comfort, a balm, a gentle tribute to human nature, with which the greatest men have been unable to dispense, not excepting him, the great military exemplar of our age; and yet for this they were not accused of rashness and want of foresight and due caution."

Sam Houston

as sinewy arms struck in memory of the Alamo and La Bahia. Santa Anna, leaping upon his stallion, was the first to fly the field, riding down his own men as he spurred to safety. Castrillon, the Spaniard, fell with a bullet through the brain, and with his death, organized resistance came to an end. Some fought on with the fury of despair, but hundreds threw away their guns and falling upon their knees, lifted entreating hands, piteously crying, "Me no Alamo! Me no Alamo!"

Houston had his ankle shattered in the first Mexican volley, and when his horse was shot from under him, his aides insisted upon carrying him off the field. Leadership, however, was no longer needed, for the battle was won. Blood-drunk, their own yells drowning out the cries for mercy, the Texans bounded through woods and quagmires, flailing, stabbing, killing. When weapons failed they tore at throats with their bare hands, and leaped like tigers upon the backs of the wretched Mexicans as they floundered in the bogs.

Not a Mexican would have been left alive but for Almonte. Leading some four or five hundred, he gained a clear space on the right, and raised a white flag. At sight of it, Rusk and other officers ran here and there, commanding, pleading, and managed to bring the fighting to a halt. Only on the field, however, for shouting men still hunted the deeper timber and morasses, and out on the prairie streamed the

Sam Houston

Texas cavalry in furious and unrelenting pursuit of fugitives.

Santa Anna and such others as could secure mounts had made for the Harrisburg road in the belief that the way to escape was open, but their cowardice met proper reward at Vince's Bayou. "Deaf" Smith had done his work well, and finding the bridge destroyed, the frantic riders plunged down the steep bank and tried to swim the stream. Many were drowned in the swift waters, and the others met death at the hands of the pursuit. Racing up and down, the Texans picked off the fleeing Mexicans as they floundered in the mire, or tried to crawl up the opposite bank, and by the time darkness fell, Vince's Creek ran red with blood, and dead bodies choked its current.

Eighteen minutes was the duration of the actual battle, or, rather, the slaughter. When the casualties were counted, it was found that the Texan loss was only six killed and twenty-five wounded (three of whom died later) while of the Mexican army, 630 were killed, 208 wounded and 730 made prisoners. The Texans sustained their losses during Castrillon's first fire, Mexican resistance virtually coming to an end with the carrying of the barricades.

It was not so much that Santa Anna's men were cowards as that they were stunned by the sheer ferocity of the attack, paralyzed by a conviction of Texan invincibility. "Deaf" Smith, losing his sword and pistol, snatched weapons from enemy hands, and as it

Sam Houston

was with him, so was it with others of the fierce frontier breed. When the Mexican bodies were gathered for burial the following day, it was commented on that two out of every three had met death from knives or clubbed rifles, and that the blows were in the back of the head, showing that they were killed while in flight.

Rich were the spoils of battle, including 900 English muskets, 300 sabers, 200 pistols, 300 mules, 100 horses, and a goodly amount of clothing, tents and supplies, together with a chest of silver coin. Somewhat later, when the inventory had been completed, Houston ordered an equitable division, and after \$2,000 had been voted to the Texas navy, each man received the princely sum of \$7.50, the only money, by the way, that came to the soldiers during the entire campaign.

[XV]

"THE NAPOLEON OF THE WESTERN WORLD"

*A*LL through the soft spring night the Texans celebrated their victory, dancing around bonfires, draping the pack mules with captured finery, and cheering wounded Houston as wildly as though they had never cursed him for cowardice or flouted his authority. When dawn broke, the search for fugitives was resumed, horsemen beating the tall grass of the prairie, shouting like fox hunters as the wretched Mexicans were driven from cover, and closely examining every captive in the hope that it might be Santa Anna.

"You will find the Hero of Tampico, if you find him at all," said Houston, "making his retreat on all fours, dressed as a common soldier."

It was a true prediction. Santa Anna, reaching Vince's Bayou well in advance of the pursuit, had lost his horse in the crossing, but finding some old clothes in an abandoned cabin, set out on foot in the direction of San Felipe. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon that Lieutenant James Sylvester saw a head

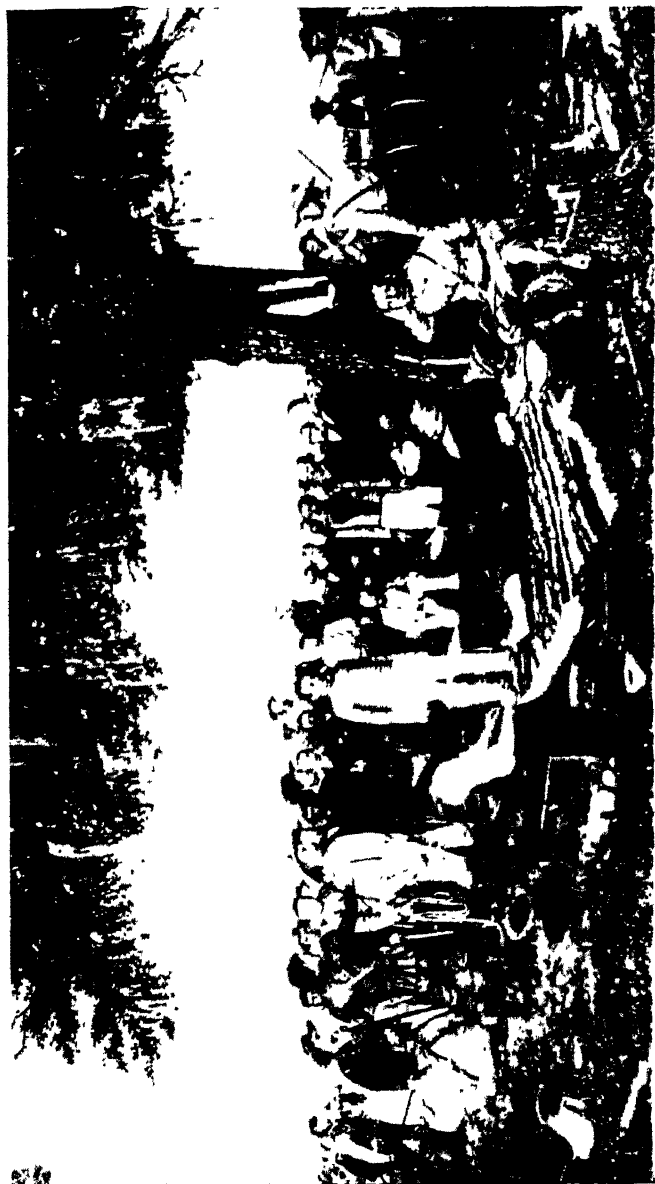
Sam Houston

raised cautiously above the grass, and raced over the prairie to where the fleeing dictator was attempting to make a burrow for himself in the mud. At first he thought his prisoner a mere soldier, but closer inspection revealed fine linen and jeweled studs beneath the ragged cotton jacket, and it was in high excitement that he rode back to camp. Suspicion became certainty when he saw the Mexican prisoners take off their caps at sight of his captive, murmuring, "*El Presidente!*"

Brought before Houston, who was lying under a tree, suffering torments from his shattered ankle, Santa Anna at once confessed his identity and demanded the treatment due a prisoner of war. Almonte, who spoke perfect English, was sent for, and the dictator, trembling like an aspen, begged for some of the opium in his captured baggage. Raw nerves soothed by the narcotic, he managed to regain assurance, and it was with something of his old grand manner that he turned to Houston and said: "You may consider yourself born to no common destiny, for you have conquered the Napoleon of the Western World. I ask generosity for the vanquished."

"You should have remembered that at the Alamo," was Houston's stern reply.

"I was justified in my course by my usages of war," protested Santa Anna. "I had summoned a surrender, and they had refused. The place was then taken by storm, and the usages of war justified the slaughter of the vanquished."



THE SURRENDER OF SANTA ANNA

From a painting in the State House, Austin, Texas

Sam Houston

"That was the case once," said Houston, "but it is now obsolete. Such usages among civilized nations have yielded to the influences of humanity."

"However this may be, I was acting under the orders of my government."

"Why, you are the government of Mexico!" declared the Texan.

"I have orders in my possession commanding me so to act," insisted Santa Anna.

"A dictator, sir, has no superior."

"I have orders, General Houston, from my government, commanding me to exterminate every man found in arms in the province of Texas, and treat all such as pirates; for they have no government, and are fighting under no recognized flag. This will account for the positive orders of my government."

"So far as this point is concerned," Houston answered, "the Texans flatter themselves they have a government already, and they will probably be able to make a flag. But if you feel excused for your conduct at San Antonio, you have not the same excuse for the massacre of Colonel Fannin's command. They had capitulated on terms proffered by your general. And yet, after the capitulation, they were all perfidiously massacred, without the privilege of even dying with arms in their hands."

"I declare to you, general," said Santa Anna, laying his hand on his heart, "that I was not apprized of the fact that they had capitulated. General Urrea in-

Sam Houston

formed me that he had conquered them in a battle, and under this impression I ordered their execution."

"I *know*, general, that the men had capitulated," Houston exclaimed, half rising in his passion.

"Then I was ignorant of it," cried Santa Anna. "And after your asseveration, I should not have a shadow of doubt, if it were not that General Urrea had no authority whatever to receive their capitulation. And if the day ever comes that I can get Urrea into my hands, I will execute him for his duplicity in not giving me information of the facts."

At this point, Almonte judged it expedient to turn the conversation into other channels, and asked why Houston had not attacked the Mexicans on the 20th. "You had reasons to suppose we should be reenforced," he said. "And yet if you had risked a battle that day, there would have been another story to tell, perhaps, for our men were then ready to fight, and so anxious for the battle to come on that we could hardly keep them in their ranks. Why did you wait till the next morning, general?"

"Well," replied Houston, "I see I was right. I knew you expected I should bring on the battle that day, and were consequently prepared for it. Now if I must be questioned by an inferior officer in the presence of his general, I will say that was just the reason *why* I did not fight; and besides, I thought there was no use in having two bites at one cherry. As for reenforcements, sir, it matters not how many reenforce-

Sam Houston

ments you have." Taking a half-eaten ear of dry corn from his pocket, he held it up and asked, "How can you expect to conquer men who fight for freedom when their general can march four days with one ear of corn for his rations?"

Santa Anna now took charge of the conversation again, and proposed peace negotiations, but Houston replied that such matters were for the civil authority, and must be referred to the government. The captive slyly remarked that the government did not seem to be available, but when Houston persisted in his refusal, asked what terms would be given for an armistice. Houston answered that he was not prepared to make any pledges whatsoever, and the abject Santa Anna, eager to placate, sat down and penned the following order to General Filisola:

EXCELLENT SIR:

Having yesterday evening, with the small division under my immediate command, had an encounter with the enemy, which, notwithstanding I had previously taken all possible precautions, proved unfortunate, I am, in consequence, a prisoner in the hands of the enemy. Under these circumstances, your Excellency will order General Gaona with his division to countermarch to Bexar, and wait for orders. Your Excellency will also, with the division under your immediate command, march to the same place. The division under command of General Urrea will retire to Guadalupe Victoria. I have agreed with Gen-

Sam Houston

eral Houston for an armistice, until matters can be so regulated that the war shall cease forever.

Even as Santa Anna wrote the dispatch, Filisola was already retiring. He had joined Gaona, and the two commands had crossed the Brazos in preparation for a march on Nacogdoches. On the 22d a wounded officer rode in with the full story of San Jacinto, and on his assurance that the victorious Texans were coming fast, Filisola and Gaona began a panic-stricken retreat. Couriers were sent to Sesma, to Urrea and to Colonel Salas at Columbia, and Victoria was given as a concentration point.

It was not until the 27th that "Deaf" Smith, carrying Santa Anna's orders, succeeded in overtaking the fugitive army, such was the speed of the flight. By this time Urrea had joined Filisola, and although the combined force numbered three thousand, the men were not only exhausted, but had lost arms and supplies in the wild rout. Only too glad to have authority for a retreat, the commander accepted the instructions at once, and the ragamuffin troops continued their demoralized way as fast as weary legs permitted.

Houston's messengers found President Burnet and his perambulatory government at Galveston Island, all poised for a new flight, but when the president and his cabinet reached San Jacinto a week after the battle, they carried themselves with the air of men whose unassisted heroism had won the war. Knowing that

Sam Houston

they had failed Houston at every turn, they hated him, and the commander-in-chief was not only brushed aside, but even humiliated in a number of ways. Vice-President Zavala and Secretary of War Rusk, who had been with Houston on the march, interposed indignant protests, however, and kept enmity in check.

Facing the necessity of a journey to New Orleans for surgical treatment, Houston asked a leave of absence, and urged the appointment of Rusk as a competent and popular man to head the army. The government granted both requests, but in selecting Rusk's successor, named Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar. This amazing person, one of a famous Southern family, had joined the Texas army just before San Jacinto, and when he distinguished himself in Sherman's ill-fated cavalry charge, Houston generously gave him command of the cavalry. Bravery, however, was Lamar's one recommendation, for he was as ambitious as erratic, and quickly made himself the leader of an anti-Houston group.

When the time came for the president and cabinet to leave San Jacinto, it was discovered that no provision whatsoever had been made for the wounded commander-in-chief, but the indignant captain of the boat refused to weigh anchor until Houston came aboard. The same policy of humiliation was pursued when Galveston was reached, for he was not given passage on a government steamer and was entirely without money. The owners of the *Flora*, a small

Sam Houston

American schooner, took his promise to pay in lieu of cash, however, and relieved his desperate plight.

On May 28, when the little vessel docked at New Orleans, Houston was nigh unto death, for he had been without proper medical attention for a full forty days, and his wound was beginning to mortify. The levee was packed with great crowds gathered to cheer the Hero of San Jacinto, but he fainted from the agony of being lifted ashore, and heard nothing of the ovation that might have soothed his bruised heart. Colonel Christy, an old friend, took him at once to his home, and the surgeon who operated that very day, taking twenty-two pieces of bone from the shattered ankle, was none other than Dr. James Kerr who had attended Houston at Horseshoe Bend.

Meanwhile the government was engaged in bitter controversy over the disposition of Santa Anna. Naturally enough, memory of the Alamo and Goliad made for hot hatred against the dictator, and demagogic Lamar spared no pains to inflame resentment, shouting loudly against negotiations with the "assassin," and demanding that he be treated as "an apprehended murderer rather than as a prisoner of war." Clamoring for his execution, according to the "code of Draco," Lamar insisted that it "would read well in the future annals of the present period that the first act of this young republic was to teach the Caligula of the age that, in the administration of public justice,

Sam Houston

the vengeance of the law falls alike impartially on the prince and the peasant."

Houston was the only one with vision enough to see Santa Anna's value as an asset. A dead dictator meant an enraged and permanently hostile Mexico, while a live Santa Anna would certainly act as a deterrent to aggression, and might possibly result in peace and the recognition of Texas independence. There was also his shrewd belief that a noble clemency would have good effect upon popular sentiment in the United States. Before his departure for New Orleans, he had put these views on paper, and it was largely because of his unanswerable reasoning that the government disregarded threats and entered into the following agreement:

Article 1. General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna agrees that he will not take up arms, nor will he exercise his influence to cause them to be taken up, against the people of Texas, during the present war of independence.

Article 2. All hostilities between the Mexican and Texan troops will cease immediately, both on land and water.

Article 3. The Mexican troops will evacuate the territory of Texas, passing to the other side of the Rio Grande del Norte.

Article 4. The Mexican army, in its retreat, shall not take the property of any person without his consent and just indemnification, using only

Sam Houston

such articles as may be necessary for its subsistence in cases where the owners may not be present, and remitting to the commander of the army of Texas, or to the commissioners to be appointed for the adjustment of such matters, an account of the value of the property consumed, the place where taken, and the name of the owner, if it can be ascertained.

Article 5. That all private property, including horses, cattle, negro slaves, or indentured persons of whatever denomination, that may have been captured by any portion of the Mexican army, or may have taken refuge in the said army, since the commencement of the late invasion, shall be restored to the commander of the Texan army, or to such persons as may be appointed by the Government of Texas to receive them.

Article 6. The troops of both armies will refrain from coming into contact with each other; and, to this end, the commander of the army of Texas will be careful not to approach within a shorter distance of the Mexican army than five leagues.

Article 7. The Mexican army shall not make any other delay on its march than that which is necessary to take up their hospitals, baggage, etc., and to cross the rivers. Any delay, not necessary to these purposes, to be considered an infraction of this agreement.

Article 8. By express, to be immediately despatched, this agreement shall be sent to General Filisola, and to General T. J. Rusk, commander of the Texan army, in order that they may be ap-

Sam Houston

prized of its stipulations; and, to this end, they will exchange engagements to comply with the same.

Article 9. That all Texan prisoners now in possession of the Mexican army, or its authorities, be forthwith released, and furnished with free passports to return to their homes; in consideration of which a corresponding number of Mexican prisoners, rank and file, now in possession of the Government of Texas, shall be immediately released. The remainder of the Mexican prisoners that continue in possession of the Government of Texas, to be treated with due humanity; any extraordinary comforts that may be furnished them to be at the charge of the Government of Mexico.

Article 10. General Lopez de Santa Anna will be sent to Vera Cruz, as soon as it shall be deemed proper.

The contracting parties sign this instrument for the above mentioned purposes, by duplicate, at the port of Velasco, this the 14th day of May, 1836.

DAVID G. BURNET,

ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

JAMES COLLINGSWORTH, Secretary of State.

BAILEY HARDEMAN, Secretary of the Treasury.

P. H. GRAYSON, Attorney-General.

A second treaty was also made, in which Santa Anna acknowledged the independence of Texas, and pledged himself to have his action confirmed by Mex-

Sam Houston

ico, but this was kept secret at the dictator's request, for as he carefully explained he did not desire to have an adverse public opinion aroused at home until he himself was on the ground to combat it.

The Texas commissioners managed to reach the retreating Filisola on May 26, just as he was nearing the Rio Grande, and the Mexican general quickly gave the treaty his ratification. His army, exhausted, demoralized and starving, was in no shape to resume hostilities, and Filisola's one desire was to reach Matamoros before his stumbling, staggering men all dropped dead in their tracks. Better than anyone else, he knew that he was being saved from annihilation.

Mexico, however, had no such feeling. The news of San Jacinto proved a terrible shock, for Santa Anna had been reporting a victorious campaign, and now to hear that Filisola and the main army were in full retreat was more than national vanity could bear. Santa Anna was deposed as president and his treaties repudiated, after which Filisola was removed as a coward and a traitor, and none other than General Urrea promoted to the chief command.

The people were told that San Jacinto had been won by uniformed soldiers of the United States, that the infamous Andrew Jackson was now resolved upon the conquest of Mexico, and men and money were asked for a new Texas campaign that would prove Mexican valor to the world. Aside from these flourishes, nothing whatever was done, Urrea waiting pa-

Sam Houston

tiently in Matamoros for reenforcements and supplies that never came. All knew that a second campaign would prove as disastrous as the first, and moreover, every cent spent in the fruitless attempt to recover Texas meant that much less to steal.

[XVI]

TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES

TEXAS, for that matter, did not like the treaty any better than Mexico. The colonists, naturally enough, wanted Santa Anna punished for the Alamo and Goliad, and the violent Lamar also won an enthusiastic following among the hundreds of volunteers who came pouring in from the United States. Too late for the fighting, and with time hanging heavily on their hands, these adventurers were eager for anything that promised excitement, and joined loudly in the clamor for Santa Anna's execution.

Burnet, supported by Rusk, held firmly to his pledged word, and went ahead with the plans for release, but when mob violence prevented, he weakly accepted the situation. The fallen dictator and his staff were actually on board the steamer when a "General" Thomas Jefferson Green, just arrived from New Orleans with 150 men, announced that the vessel would not be allowed to sail.

Santa Anna, convinced that he was about to be shot, threw himself on the floor of the cabin, and screamed for opium that he might kill himself, but when Green

Sam Houston

threatened to clap him into irons, meekly followed his captors off the boat. More than that, he took a Texas flag in his trembling hand, and waved it frantically in an effort to appease the crowd that lined the shore. To Green's credit, he gave the prisoner safe conduct to a prison cell, and when he had been placed under guard, the "army" gravely informed the government that it would now proceed to deliberate Santa Anna's fate.

Weak as the amiable Burnet proved himself in respect to the captive dictator, he showed himself still more futile and incompetent in the conduct of government. Money was an imperative need, but his one plan for replenishing the empty treasury was the sale of land-scrip in New York. When the bids sank as low as a cent an acre, he had nothing else to offer. No effort was made to collect taxes, and when the turbulence of the idle, unpaid "army" became a positive menace, his solution of the problem was the appointment of Mirabeau Lamar to take Rusk's place as commander-in-chief.

The men of San Jacinto, however, knew Lamar to be Houston's enemy, and would have none of him, although he used every art of bombastic oratory to gain their favor. "The voice of man makes generals, but God makes heroes," he cried in a speech of appeal, and after an hour of the same sort of fustian, plaintively announced that if the army did not desire him as its commander, he would enter the ranks "and lead

Sam Houston

the van to victory, guided by the flash of my sword." All without effect, for Rusk was retained in command by the crushing vote of 1500 to 179.

The army, however, with nothing to do, and daily reenforced by other adventurers from the United States, waxed more and more restless and in July it was finally decided that Santa Anna should be turned over to the troops for instant execution. When poor Burnet refused, mobs threatened his death, but it was his luck to possess a wife of the Spartan breed. Mrs. Burnet calmly threw her parlor window wide open, lighted her lamps and sat all through the night in plain view with a cocked pistol in her strong, unwavering hand.

Colonel Henry Millard, a San Jacinto hero, was in charge of the detachment sent to seize Santa Anna, but a majority of his men proceeded to adorn their hair with all the vine leaves that the capital afforded, and by the time they had sobered, the substantial citizens of the community were rallied in Burnet's support. Moreover, an Ohio company calling themselves the Buckeye Rangers had just reached Texas, and out of fond remembrance of the hospitality extended by Burnet's brother at the Burnet House in Cincinnati, also came to the government's aid. What really stopped the rowdy business, however, was Sam Houston's voice of thunder. He was only recently returned from New Orleans, and was still weak and suffering, but anger gave him strength to pen a

Sam Houston

letter of public protest. He wrote from Amish Bayou on July 26:

Disregard, if you will, our national character, place what construction you please upon the rules of civilized warfare, we are compelled by every principle of humanity and morality to abstain from every act of passion or inconsideration that is unproductive of positive good. Execute Santa Anna and what will be the fate of the Texans who are held prisoners by the Mexicans? What will be the condition of the North Americans residing within the limits of Mexico? Death to them and confiscation of their property is the least that can be expected. Doubtless torture will be added to the catastrophe, when stimulated by ignorance, fanaticism, and the last expiring struggle of the priesthood for power and dominion. Texas, to be respected, must be considerate, politic, and just in her actions. In cool blood to offer up the living to the manes of the departed only finds an example in the religion and warfare of the savages.

The affairs of Texas, as connected with General Santa Anna as President of the Republic of Mexico, have become a matter of consideration to which the attention of the United States has been called, and for Texas, at this moment, to proceed to extreme measure, as to the merits or demerits of General Santa Anna, would be treating that government with high disrespect, and I would respectfully add, in my opinion, it would be incurring the most unfortunate responsibility for Texas.

Sam Houston

I, therefore, Commander-in-chief of the army of the Republic, do solemnly protest against the trial, sentence, and execution of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, President of the Republic of Mexico, until the relations in which we are to stand to the United States shall be ascertained.

This letter would have been enough in itself, without doubt, but it happened to receive reenforcement from no less a person than Andrew Jackson. Santa Anna, on the advice of Stephen Austin, had written the President of the United States, begging him to aid in securing his release, and professing a burning desire to return to Mexico in order to have the independence of Texas acknowledged. While Jackson refused to commit himself on the political questions involved, he did write to Houston as follows:

I take the liberty of offering a remark or two upon a report which is current here, that Santa Anna is to be brought before a military court, to be tried and shot. Nothing now could tarnish the character of Texas more than such an act as this. Sound policy as well as humanity approved of the counsels which spared him his life. His person is still of much consequence to you. He is the pride of the Mexican soldiers, and the favorite of the priesthood. Let not his blood be shed, unless imperious necessity demands it as a retaliation for future Mexican massacres.

In late July, President Burnet, eager to be rid of an office that was frankly beyond his powers, issued a

Sam Houston

call for an election to be held in September. The first candidacies to be announced were those of Stephen Austin and Henry Smith, the former governor, but in August, a popular demand for Houston manifested itself, at least a score of large mass meetings insisting that he enter the race. Still suffering from his wound, and embittered by his experiences in the public service, Houston had resolved not to seek office, and his change of mind was due to a conviction that it was the one chance for harmony. As he explained afterwards:

“While in New Orleans a number of Texans requested me to become a candidate for the presidency. This I positively refused to do. From that time up to within fourteen days of the election, I refused to let my name be used, nor would I, if elected, consent to serve in the office. General Austin and Governor Smith were the candidates, and with these gentlemen my relations were most kind. It was not a desire to obtain the office of president which ultimately caused me to let my name be used; but there were two parties in Texas, which were known as the ‘Austin’ and ‘Wharton’ parties. . . . Governor Smith was the ostensible head of the ‘Wharton’ party. So far as I could judge, the parties were pretty equally balanced.

“In this posture of affairs, I was firmly impressed with the belief that, if either of the gentlemen should be elected, it would be next to impossible to organize and sustain a government; as whoever it might be,

Sam Houston

he would be compelled to fill all the offices with his own friends, and those of the opposite feelings would, of course, oppose the administration, which, in the then condition of the country, could only be sustained by the united efforts of the community. Not being identified with either of the parties, I believed I would be enabled so to consolidate the influence of both, by harmonizing them, as to form an administration which would triumph over all the difficulties attendant upon the outset of the constitutional government of Texas."

The result of the election was an overwhelming triumph for Houston as he received 4374 votes to 745 for Smith and 587 for Austin. As a matter of truth, however, no other result could reasonably have been expected. Austin's earnest desire to maintain peace with Mexico, even when peace was no longer possible, had lost him many friends among the original settlers, and many hundreds had come into Texas who were not familiar with the character of the man or his heroic services. As for Smith, he was remembered only as a passionate dunderhead who had devoted himself to bickering at a time when the country was in gravest danger. Against these two stood Sam Houston, the fighting man, the conqueror, the liberator.

Sweet-singing Lamar, by virtue of tireless oratory, was elected vice-president, the new constitution was ratified with a whoop, and by an almost unanimous vote, the people signified their desire to be annexed to

Sam Houston

the United States. The inauguration was set for December 1, but President Burnet, only too glad to escape his responsibilities, resigned in October, and Houston took office on the 22d. His address, delivered extemporaneously, was simple and dignified, and at the close he disengaged his battered sword and said: "It now, sir, becomes my duty to make a presentation of this sword, the emblem of my past office. I have worn it with some humble pretensions in the defense of my country, and should danger again call for my services, I expect to resume it, and respond to that call, if needful, with my blood and my life."

The most pressing, if not the most important, of the many problems that faced the new president was the disposition of Santa Anna. Shortly before his inauguration, Houston had visited the captive, and when the woebegone dictator burst into tears, the giant Texan took him to his broad chest, and soothed him as though he had been a child. One of the first acts of Congress was to pass a resolution ordering Santa Anna's retention as a hostage; but when it was vetoed, the legislators backed down, and Houston, left with a free hand, ordered an immediate release. Seemingly full of gratitude, and pledging himself to gain an acknowledgment of the independence of Texas, Santa Anna proceeded to Washington, where he was well received by President Jackson, and then sailed to Mexico on an American man-of-war. Landing at Vera Cruz, February 23, 1837, he found himself in

Sam Houston

disgrace and sought refuge on his estate near Jalapa until the time should be ripe for a coup.

A second problem was the attitude of the United States. From the time that they took arms against Mexico, the Texans had openly expressed the hope that they might live again under the Stars and Stripes, and Austin, Archer and Wharton, the first commissioners, were instructed to state that annexation was the desire of the revolutionists. Now, in the September election, the people had again declared for annexation. Despite the lies of history, it was Andrew Jackson who stood in opposition. While it is true enough that Jackson wanted Texas as part of the Union, his idea was to gain the territory by purchase, and his first reaction to the rebellion was one of bitter disapproval. Reference has already been made to his refusal to receive the Texas commissioners in 1835, and also to his rigid enforcement of neutrality. To be sure, many volunteers went to Texas, from the North as well as the South, but as Jackson's Secretary of State pointed out in answer to a Mexican protest, no nation had ever been able to control the sympathies of individuals.

These volunteers, however, had small share in the winning of Texas independence, for all were massacred at Goliad, and it was original colonists only who fought the decisive engagement. The best answer to the charge that Jackson was the secret backer of the Texas uprising lies in the facts of San Jacinto. Had the power of the United States been behind Houston,

Sam Houston

as many historians allege, is it not reasonable to suppose that he would have had more than 750 half-starved, half-armed boys to wage the battle upon which depended the fate of the rebellion, if not the lives of every Texan?

By the way of still further refutation, Jackson's opposition to the recognition of Texas independence was supported by senators from slave-holding states, while the demand for recognition came from free states, and was urged by Northern senators. Five days after San Jacinto, Senator Morris of Ohio presented a memorial from the citizens of Cincinnati, asking the recognition of Texas independence, and it was King of Alabama and Porter of Louisiana who denounced the action as premature. A little later, when a similar memorial from the people of Pennsylvania was introduced, Senator Preston of South Carolina argued against it as a violation of American neutrality.

In May President Burnet appointed James Collingsworth and Peter Grayson as his representatives in Washington, with orders to work for recognition, and on June 18, Henry Clay, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, reported: "The independence of Texas ought to be acknowledged by the United States, whenever satisfactory information shall be received that it has, in successful operation, a civil government, capable of performing the duties and fulfilling the obligations of an independent power."

It would have carried had not President Jackson

Sam Houston

personally requested that a vote be postponed until additional facts could be gathered, and Henry M. Morfitt was sent to Texas to investigate conditions. Mr. Morfitt returned with a most favorable report, yet when Congress met in December, Jackson advised against recognition, and in a further message on the 21st, set forth these other reasons why action should be delayed:

In the contest between Spain and her revolted colonists we stood aloof and waited, not only until the ability of new States to protect themselves was fully established, but until the danger of their being again subjugated had entirely passed away. Then, and not until then, were they recognized. Such was our course in regard to Mexico herself. . . . Were there nothing peculiar in the relative situation of the United States and Texas, our acknowledgment of its independence at such a crisis could scarcely be regarded as consistent with that prudent reserve with which we have heretofore held ourselves bound to treat all similar questions. But there are circumstances in the relations of the two countries which require us to act on this occasion with even more than our wonted caution. Texas was once claimed as a part of our property. . . . A large part of its civilized inhabitants are emigrants from the United States . . . more than all, it is known that the people of that country have instituted the same form of government with our own, and have since the close of your last session openly resolved, on the acknowledg-

Sam Houston

ment by us of their independence, to seek admission into the Union as one of the Federal States. The last circumstance is a matter of popular delicacy, and forces upon us considerations of the gravest character. The title of Texas to the territory she claims is identified with her independence. She asks us to acknowledge that title to the territory with an avowed design to treat immediately of its transfer to the United States. It becomes us to beware of a too early movement, as it might subject us, however unjustly, to the imputation of seeking to establish the claim of our neighbors to a territory with a view to its subsequent acquisition by ourselves. Prudence, therefore, seems to dictate that we should still stand aloof and maintain our present attitude, if not until Mexico itself or one of the great foreign powers shall recognize the independence of the new Government, at least until the lapse of time or the course of events shall have proved beyond cavil or dispute the ability of the people of the country to maintain their separate sovereignty and to uphold the Government constituted by them.

As a consequence of Jackson's stand, the resolution was rejected by a vote of 23 to 19, a narrow margin that showed the strength of Texas sentiment. Thus matters stood when Houston assumed office. Deciding to deal with the matter vigorously, so that it might be settled either by recognition or refusal at an early date, he sent William H. Wharton to Washington as the representative of Texas, and later reenforced him with

Sam Houston

Memucan Hunt. Wharton and Hunt were furnished with ample evidence to prove that Texas was independent both *de facto* and *de jure*, and while urged to press Congress for recognition, were also instructed to cultivate the ministers of foreign powers.

England, for instance, was to be informed of the enormous possibilities of the cotton production of Texas, control of which might well free her industries of their dependence upon the South; and France could be told that an independent Texas would act as a barrier to the expansion of the United States, and prevent American monopoly of the gulf trade. Wharton, dynamic and brilliant, at once proceeded to carry out his instructions with rare skill, and on January 11, 1837, Senator Walker of Mississippi introduced the following resolution:

That the State of Texas, having established and maintained an independent government, is capable of performing those duties, foreign and domestic, which appertain to independent governments; and it appearing that there is no longer any reasonable prospect of the successful prosecution of the war, by Mexico, against the State, it is expedient and proper, and in conformity with laws of nations, and the practise of this government in like places, that the independent political existence of that State be acknowledged by the Government of the United States.

At this point, however, political considerations intervened. The North, under the lash of John Quincy

Sam Houston

Adams, began to feel that recognition would mean annexation, and that annexation meant the addition of a vast slave territory. Martin Van Buren, Jackson's choice to follow him in the presidency, also feared that recognition would lead to annexation, and realized it as an awkward issue for 1838. Either he would have to be for annexation, alienating his Northern support, or lose his Southern support by taking a stand against it. He was, therefore, eager to have the whole matter go over.

Facing this delicate situation, Wharton attacked from a new angle. Although the Texas constitution forbade the importation of slaves except from the United States, various blackbirders were caught in attempts to take captured Africans across the Sabine, and only in December, Houston had made bitter complaint that the evil business was being carried on by citizens of the United States. At once Wharton made much of this matter, insisting that the American government cooperate with Texas for the suppression of the "infamous traffic," a stand that did much to abate the antagonism of the abolitionists.

At the same time, Houston instructed Wharton to let it be known that if the United States did not extend recognition, Texas would not ask again, but would enter into negotiations with Great Britain, and that assurances had been received that the British would go far in the matter of friendship and aid in return for *commercial benefits*.

Sam Houston

Santa Anna was still another factor that worked for the benefit of Texas. Reaching Washington in January, the chastened dictator stated frankly that Mexico could never hope to regain Texas, that the independence of the Lone Star Republic was a fixed fact, and that his first activity, on arriving in his native land, would be to secure a ratification of the treaty that he had signed at San Jacinto. These expressions, naturally enough, answered the objection that the recognition of Texas would be regarded as an unfriendly act by Mexico.

As a result of these varied compulsions, Texas sentiment took an upward swing, and the House voted for recognition on February 28, the Senate following the example on March 1 by a vote of 23 to 19. The fate of Texas was now in Jackson's hands, and this jubilant dispatch from Wharton to Houston tells of his action:

I have at length the happiness to inform you that President Jackson has closed his political career by admitting our country into the great family of nations. On Friday night last (March 3), at near twelve o'clock, he consummated the recognition of the Senate and the diplomatic appropriation bill of the lower House, by nominating a Mr. Labranche of Louisiana, chargé d'affaires near the Republic of Texas. He also sent for General Hunt and myself and requested the pleasure of a glass of wine.

[XVII]

HOUSTON AS AN ADMINISTRATOR

*W*HEN President Houston turned away from international questions to face domestic problems, even his indomitable spirit might well have been depressed. The threats of Mexico compelled the maintenance of an army and a navy, yet not only was the treasury empty, but the new republic staggered under a crushing load of debt. Congress, drunk with a thousand and one impractical schemes, constituted an added burden, nor was there any sane, constructive public opinion to rely upon. The Texans thrilled to the happy conviction that independence would prove an automatic device for the solution of every difficulty, and in addition, their highly individualized lives had not fitted them for cooperative effort.

One of Houston's first acts was to bring the two defeated candidates into his cabinet, Austin being named as secretary of state and Smith as secretary of the treasury, and in various other ways he strove to allay factionalism. This done, he clamped his iron jaws and matched himself against Congress in a fight for economy and common sense. Always a puzzling character,

Sam Houston

Houston was never more bewildering than in the startling changes he effected when passing from the private citizen to the public servant. Money meant nothing to him personally, for he gave and spent with equal lavishness, but when it came to public funds, no man was more frugal and thrifty. Sam Houston did not know what it was to refuse a favor to a friend, and in selecting these friends he followed impulse rather than judgment, but President Houston was as hard as granite.

Careless of whom it might hurt, he saw to it that useless officials were thrown out, and salaries cut to the bone; crazy bills met with decisive vetoes; a \$5,000,000 bond issue was authorized and agents sent to the United States for its negotiation; courts were organized, mail routes established and a land office created.

Mexican agents were at work among the Indians, inciting them to make war on the outlying settlements, but by a wise combination of force and fairness Houston pacified the tribes and restored peace. Ignoring these treacherous activities, he then issued a proclamation urging trade and friendly intercourse between Texas and the north Mexican states, with the result that caravans again began to cross the Rio Grande.

Even as he builded, death robbed Houston of two men upon whose wisdom and loyalty he most relied. Lorenzo de Zavala, the incorruptible patriot, passed away in November, and on December 27, Stephen

Sam Houston

Austin died from an attack of pneumonia brought on by overwork and the lack of proper housing. When the president, in his proclamation, declared that "the Father of Texas is no more," he spoke truly, for the foundations of the colonies were Austin's courage, justice, sagacity and tireless energy.

Shortly after the battle of San Jacinto, a town had been laid off on Buffalo Bayou and named in honor of Houston. In the spring of 1837, the capital was moved from Columbia to the new and more hopeful settlement, and here, on May 1, 1837, Congress met for a second session. Houston's first words had to do with the recognition of Texas by the United States, and it was with all the force of a challenge that he stated it as "an obligation to evince to the world that we are worthy to be free."

The report on financial conditions showed that not one dollar of the \$5,000,000 loan had been placed, a failure largely due to the panic that followed Van Buren's inauguration, and that the land law, passed over Houston's veto, was proving worse than useless. These things, he said, meant that the republic must depend upon its own resources, avoiding extravagance and visionary schemes, and cutting according to its cloth. Texas might well be regarded as an empire, but it was an empire in the making, and sound foundations were a necessity.

Throughout the fight for recognition by the United States, the Northern Whigs had leveled continual at-

Sam Houston

tack against Texas as a slave mart, and it must have been with much relish that the president devoted a part of his message to unsparing denunciation of the African slave trade. After citing evidence that great numbers of captive blacks were being concentrated in Cuba for smuggling into Texas, he called upon the governments of the United States and Great Britain to use their navies for the suppression of the inhuman traffic.

For all of Houston's vigorous optimism, the outlook was dark to the point of gloom. Taxes were not being paid, the legislators persisted in passing crazy bills, the drunken, disorderly army constituted far more of a menace than a protection, and there was not even physical comfort for the overworked officials who drudged at the thankless task of bringing order out of chaos. Audubon, the famous ornithologist, visiting Texas at this time, gives the following graphic picture of its president and his capital:

We walked toward the President's house, accompanied by the Secretary of the Navy, and as soon as we rose above the bank we saw before us a level of far-extending prairie, destitute of timber and rather poor soil. Houses, half-finished, and most of them without roofs, tents, and a liberty pole, with the capitol, were all exhibited to our view at once. We approached the President's mansion, however, wading in water above our ankles. The abode of President Houston is

Sam Houston

a small log house, consisting of two rooms and a passage through, after the Southern fashion. The moment we stepped over the threshold, on the right of the passage, we found ourselves ushered into what in other countries would be called the antechamber; the ground floor, however, was muddy and filthy, a large fire was burning, and a small table, covered with paper and writing materials, was in the centre; camp-beds, trunks, and different materials were strewn around the room. . . . The President was engaged in the opposite room on some national business, and we could not see him for some time. Meanwhile, we amused ourselves by walking in the capitol, which was yet without a roof, and the floors, benches, and tables of both houses of Congress were as well saturated with water as our clothes had been in the morning. . . . We first caught sight of President Houston as he walked from one of the grog-shops, where he had been to stop the sale of ardent spirits. . . . He was dressed in a fancy velvet coat and trousers trimmed with broad gold lace, and around his neck was tied a cravat somewhat in the style of '76. He received us kindly, was desirous of retaining us for a while, and offered us every facility in his power. He at once removed us from the anteroom to his private chamber, which, by the way, was not much cleaner than the former. We were severally introduced by him to the different members of his Cabinet and Staff, and at once asked to drink grog with him, which we did, wishing success to the new Republic.

Sam Houston

It was this sort of housing that had killed Austin and Zavala, but Houston's giant frame threw off the bitter cold even as it had thrown off years of drunkenness, and it was with superb physical energy that he drove at the task before him. There was a very real love for Texas in his determination to succeed, but also a large amount of personal vanity, for he knew that as the Lone Star Republic failed or prospered, he himself would be judged by the world. As with every man of force, his enemies were in equal proportion to his friends, and both in Texas and the United States were powerful groups eager for his ruin.

John Quincy Adams and his crew had freely denounced Houston as a drunken filibuster, an illiterate adventurer no whit better than the lawless creatures about him, and one utterly incapable of founding a state. In Texas itself, Lamar and other politicians who prided themselves upon a knowledge of Greek and Latin, were openly attacking the president for his unfitness, sneering at his fondness for buckskins and lamenting that Tallahina was not brought from her Cherokee wigwam to be the First Lady of the Land.

Looking about him, Houston's shrewd eye saw quickly that the so-called "army" constituted even more of a pressing problem than the empty treasury, rattle-pated Congress and the Lamar clique. Composed almost entirely of volunteers from the United States who had arrived in Texas after San Jacinto, it was more of a mob than a military establishment, one



STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

Sam Houston

minute shouting for money and the next minute demanding a war of some kind or other. One Felix Huston, familiarly called Old Long Shanks by the men, had forced himself into command by a certain genius for demagoguery, and held this leadership by promoting drunken debauches and planning an invasion of Mexico that would make the fortune of every volunteer.

It was about this time that there appeared upon the scene none other than Albert Sidney Johnston, that Chevalier Bayard of the Confederacy who was to die a hero's death on the bloody field of Shiloh. One of his brothers had been with Magee in the tragic adventure of 1813, and the tall youth, with a face like that on a Greek coin, had resigned from the United States army to try his fortune in the new land. An aristocrat to his finger-tips, Johnston took no pains to hide his disapproval of Houston, but while it must have hurt, for no man loved approval more, the president recognized the young Southerner's military ability, and resolved to appoint him to the high command of the army as the one chance to remedy evil conditions.

Lawless, roistering Old Long Shanks, however, refused to be superseded as senior major-general, and promptly challenged the "usurper" to a duel. Johnston accepted, holding that it was a "public duty" to meet the man who "embodied the lawless spirit of the army," although Houston assured him that he was a "damned fool," and pointed to the pile of challenges

Sam Houston

on his desk as proof that it was not necessary to fight every swashbuckler that came along.

Johnston refused to be dissuaded, and was badly wounded for his folly, whereupon Felix Huston declared that all other would-be successors might expect the same treatment. Along with this, Colonel Rodgers, one of his associates in ruffianism, added to turmoil by suggesting that the army march upon the capital, chastise the president, kick Congress out of power and "give laws to Texas."

Lacking the power to punish this downright mutiny, Houston now resorted to what his enemies loved to characterize as "Indian cunning." Old Long Shanks was lured to the capital by vague hints that the government was disposed to further his plans for the invasion of Mexico, and other leaders were drawn away from their commands by intriguing suggestions that foreign posts were about to be offered them. Acting swiftly, the president rushed forward secret orders that furloughed the volunteers by companies, and followed up by providing transportation to the United States, so that when Old Long Shanks and the others returned to headquarters, they found that the "army" had disappeared, leaving them with nothing but an example to follow.

Indian cunning, however, was of no avail against the emptiness of the treasury. What public service there was fell into demoralization, for the unpaid officials had to resign in order to earn a living, and the

Sam Houston

garrisons at important points would have starved had not Houston raised some money on his personal paper. By way of meeting the emergency, Congress gaily passed a bill authorizing the issue of \$1,000,000 in promissory notes, but the president, realizing that such an amount could not possibly be kept at par, vetoed the measure.

Slowly but surely, however, things began to better. While Mexico still refused to recognize the independence of Texas, a flourishing trade began to spring up between the two countries, and as peace began to seem assured, immigrants poured in from the United States, bringing new areas under the plow. An increase in customs receipts gave the government a fairly steady source of income, and Houston's rigid economies made it answer every legitimate purpose. With this larger promise behind him the president turned resolutely to the United States and the vexed question of annexation.

It had been expected that Martin Van Buren would favor the project but this "Northern man with Southern sympathies" feared the anger of the abolitionists, all of whom insisted that Texas was violently proslavery, and would add overwhelmingly to the strength of the South if admitted to the Union. When Hunt and Wharton pressed the matter, Van Buren grew colder and colder, finally making flat statement that annexation could not be considered as long as Mexico and Texas were "at war." The indignant Hunt mar-

Sam Houston

shaled evidence that no Mexican soldier had touched foot to Texas soil since San Jacinto, but cautious Van Buren could not be moved from his decision.

Never at any time had Houston been an enthusiastic advocate of annexation, for his proud spirit loathed the necessary attitude of supplicancy, and Van Buren's treatment aroused both anger and resentment. Resolving to end the humiliating situation, he instructed Hunt to withdraw the annexation proposal once and for all, and then sent word to General Henderson, the Texan diplomatic agent in Europe, that he now had a free hand in approaching England and France.

Secretary of State Forsyth in his final letter expressed the fervent hope that the friendly relations between Texas and the United States would not be endangered by the American refusal, and Hunt's vigorous answer may be regarded as the statement of Houston's new attitude:

The apprehension of the Honorable Mr. Forsyth that the refusal of this government to negotiate for a treaty of annexation, thereby declining all the commercial and other advantages which would be secured by that measure, may induce an attempt on the part of the Government of Texas to extend its commercial relations elsewhere, on terms most favorable to its own welfare and prosperity, is perfectly natural. . . . Should, however, the foreign commercial and other relations of the Republic of Texas necessarily become such

Sam Houston

as seriously to affect the interests of the United States, or any portion thereof, the undersigned conceives that it would be unreasonable for the government and people who had been freely proffered all she could bestow, and yet declined the offer, to complain of her on the ground of looking to her own interest primarily. Texas has generously offered to merge her national sovereignty in a domestic one, and to become a constituent part of this great confederacy. The refusal of this government to accept the overture must forever screen her from the imputation of wilfully injuring the great interests of the United States, should such a result accrue from any commercial or other regulations which she may find it necessary or expedient to enter into with foreign nations.

As Houston's term drew near to its close, the results attained must have afforded ample compensation for his sweat of body and soul. The total indebtedness amounted to less than \$2,000,000, owing to his vigilance, wise economies and decisive vetoes; a steadily increasing revenue not only paid the running expenses of government but gave guarantee of future solvency, and the country was at peace and at work.

This was his answer to John Quincy Adams and the abolitionists of the United States, and to Lamar and his slanderous Texas group. The "illiterate filibuster," the "coward of San Jacinto," the Big Drunk of the Cherokees, the vanity-crazed play-actor, working

Sam Houston

virtually single-handed, had put foundations under the tottering superstructure of government, an achievement that a skeptical world had not believed possible. No calumny could blur the shining fact.

With Houston barred from a second consecutive term by a constitutional provision, the campaign was naturally regarded as a free-for-all, and among the candidates that offered themselves were the rhetorical Lamar, Peter Grayson and that bold Collingsworth who had figured so notably in Texas history. Grayson and Collingsworth were both pioneers, and deservedly popular, but just as the campaign was drawing to its close, the country was shocked to hear that both had committed suicide.

Self-destruction was a curious *samurai* quality that manifested itself in many of those hardy frontiersmen who settled Texas and fought her battles. The gallant Rusk was to kill himself at a later day, likewise Anson Jones, who succeeded to the presidency after Houston's second term, and George Childress, that brilliant, debonair gentleman who wrote the Texan declaration of independence.

The double tragedy permitted Lamar to win by default, and loud were the rejoicings of the anti-Houston group. At last a man of the true cavalier strain was to head the republic, a courtly figure at home in broadcloth, and Texas was finally through with the crude, uncouth Houston and his Indian affectations. Pains

Sam Houston

were taken to organize public demonstrations in celebration of the "mountebank's" retirement, and not even George Washington's passing from public life was made the occasion of more bonfires and wilder cheering by the politicians.

[XVIII]

HOUSTON AND HIS ENEMIES

IT IS much the fashion to accept the degeneracy of politics without question or debate, and out of this easy acceptance has grown a belief that the campaigns of an earlier day were conducted on high ground and with scrupulous regard for the dignities, decencies and amenities. Nothing is further from the truth. Washington was subjected to vile attacks, which did not stop short of obscenity, and the annals of modern politics hold no parallel for the baseless, malignant slanders that were leveled at Sam Houston.

He had, to be sure, a genius for making enemies. Overpowering in his hugeness and supreme self-confidence, Houston had a point of view which was that of a tribal chieftain. Equality had no place in his conception or scheme of things, and he automatically and unconsciously divided men into two classes—henchmen and opponents. To those who gave him unquestioning allegiance, he was lovable, loyal and generous, binding them to him with hooks of steel, but when his sovereignty was denied, he let no opportunity

Sam Houston

pass for bitter, gibing attack that had the cut of a knife.

Naturally enough, there were many who felt honest resentment against this attitude. To such public figures as held college degrees, he was an uncouth, unpleasant creature, without any warrant in character for his overbearing ways, and to others who lacked the gift, his uncanny skill in catching and holding the popular imagination was downright demagoguery, play-acting and evil pretense. There were large groups, however, whose enmity sprang from baser causes—rascals who planned land grabs and treasury raids, or visionary adventurers who dreamed of making Texas another Rome, and hated Houston for his pacific policies that put the plow above the sword.

No sooner was Houston's administration under way than these forces of antagonism, honest and dishonest, drew together and launched attacks that would have destroyed a weaker man. The opening gun in the campaign of hate was a pamphlet entitled "Houston Displayed, or Who Won the Battle of San Jacinto: By a Farmer in the Army," secretly printed and distributed with great thoroughness. Even at that day there was keen understanding that popular memory is short-lived, and although the Texas rebellion was only one year away, every detail was subjected to bold distortion.

Starting off without preliminary flourishes, the anonymous writer declared that while Houston was

Sam Houston

with Stephen Austin on the Salado, his "whisky and opium gave out, so that from disappointment and the want of these stimulants, he became deranged. In one of his moments of delirium, he drew a pistol and attempted to blow out his brains, but was prevented by the untimely interference of Bowie and Johnson."

Sweeping aside the fact that Houston was powerless when he found himself virtually deposed as commander-in-chief, the Council having given Fannin and Johnson independent authority for the Matamoros expedition, the pamphlet charged that he "refused to take command of the troops, alleging that the interest of the country made it more necessary to make a treaty with the Indians." Also it stated that when news was brought of Santa Anna's advance, and the Alamo's danger, Houston branded the reports as lies, and would not leave for the seat of war.

"What construction can we put upon this cowardly and procrastinating course of conduct? From the indecency of his actions, we have a right to infer that the whisky of the town of Washington had more charms for him than the honorable service of his country on the battle-field. He knew he could not carry with him more than two or three days' rations; he therefore preferred to stay where he could indulge to excess the grossness of his appetite than to share with such men as Travis and Fannin the danger and glory of defending his country." Thus, while brave Texans called for aid, and the country knew an over-

Sam Houston

whelming terror, Houston spent his nights in "the grogshops of Washington in company with gamblers."

When informed at last that he must either leave for the front or lose his commission, he mounted his horse "in front of Mrs. Mann's boarding-house where he had the unblushing impudence to acknowledge to the bystanders that he did not recollect to have set out for any place, sober or free from intoxication, during the last five years, but on that occasion he considered himself sober. He was then invited to take a drink, which he refused, but taking from his pocket a phial filled with hartshorn and salts, applied it to his nostrils, which seemed to raise his dejected spirits."

Moving rapidly on through the retreat from the Colorado to the Brazos, only stopping to damn Houston for cowardice in not giving battle to Sesma, the pamphlet then described in detail what happened in the Texas camp when scouts brought the news that the Mexican army had reached San Felipe—a fantastic narrative, which must have made even Houston laugh, despite his rage. It ran as follows:

The General, who, while listening to the details of these young men, was lying in a tent with his head upon a certain woman's lap (whose name, if necessary, can be given to the public), jumped as if he had received an electric shock.

"Why, General," said she, "you nearly made me put the comb into your head; you must certainly be frightened."

Sam Houston

"Who, madam," replied the General, "would be otherwise than frightened, when not only his own destruction, but that of his country, stares him in the face? I can find no place of security, I am hunted like the stag; and for want of the Red Landers am flying from post to post with the enemy at my heels; with my officers and soldiers wanting me to fight, which my better judgment bids me not to do; the President and Cabinet also, commanding me to meet the enemy and save the country from ruin; which, all must know, I cannot do without the Red Landers and Cherokees; the Indians I might have had ere this, had that damned Convention ratified my treaty with them.

"Here is a letter from old Burnet, madam, which I will show you." Taking from his pocket a paper, he read, as follows, or nearly so: "'You will meet and fight the enemy without delay; a further retreat would prove ruinous to the country, and a disgrace to the Texians; the enemy is laughing you to scorn.' See," continued the General, "the audacity of the President; he, sitting in perfect security, orders me to fight; presuming, I suppose, that I would be as safe in the battlefield as his Excellency is in his Council Room. So soon as it is ascertained in camp that the enemy is at San Felipe, Ben Smith, and fifty other officers, and half the army will be hazing me to fight. Oh! that my heart were as a lump of sponge, that they could wring from it the last drop of my soul's blood! I am, however, commander-in-chief; I will retreat to the Red Lands; if they will not come out, I will immediately issue

Sam Houston

marching orders, and a retreat shall be commenced as soon as possible."

That the General at the time he left Groce's intended to abandon the country by the most direct road, will hardly be denied by any who were in the army at that time. The soldiers understood it so, and were constantly remonstrating.

"Why," said a man on my right hand to some soldiers near him, "have you suffered your country to be overrun, and laid waste by an enemy you have so often fought, and as often conquered? Are you not the same man that in the battle of Concepcion fought and whipped them five to one? At the Grass Fight the odds were equally as great against you; nevertheless you drove them from their position and compelled them to take shelter under the walls of Bexar, where their cannon alone afforded them protection. At the storming of Bexar the odds were against you as 6 to 1, yet you took the place and caused the whole forces of the enemy stationed there to surrender. The troops that you are now flying before are the same kind of men, and in part the same men who opposed you at Bexar, and in part commanded by the same officers. They are marching through your country in detached parties, not one of which is equal to you in numbers. Yet you fly, hide yourselves, and fly again, leaving your country and all that must be dear to you, a prey to this barbarian foe. There is a mystery in this that I cannot fathom. I should like an explanation." . . .

General Houston could not remain ignorant of

Sam Houston

these sentiments on the part of the men; they were too openly and boldly expressed for the Commander-in-chief to be ignorant of them. He felt his influence gone, and saw that the army received him as a drawback on its operations; he knew that he was more than suspected of treason; and saw no recourse was left him but to risk a battle. With this view he paraded the army and ordered Col. Sherman, with his mounted riflemen, to commence the attack; promising to support him with the infantry.

Col. Sherman, according to order, commenced the attack, with about 100 men (amongst whom was the brave General Lamar, and our respectable late Lieut. Governor James Robinson) in order to bring on a general engagement. The infantry, with their General at their head marched about 300 yards in advance of their camp, and occupied the same ground that the enemy had abandoned. By this time our mounted riflemen had attacked the enemy's out-posts, which were of cavalry, and which, after a well-contested engagement, fell back, but were well sustained by their infantry, and nine pounder.

Col. Sherman and his brave associates contended for some time with the whole Mexican force. They momentarily expected the arrival of their General at the head of the whole Texian infantry; but, to the great mortification of them all, in the midst of this unequal combat, Col. Coleman arrived with orders from the General to Sherman to draw off his men, and return to camp. On facing about, the cavalry beheld, to

Sam Houston

their surprise, the whole Texian army drawn out in battle array, on an eminence one half-mile distant from the field of action, in plain view of the contending parties; without being allowed by their commander, to give them that support, that in the outset had been promised. . . . At about sunset the whole army was marched back to camp, much wearied with the fatigues of the day; and the contempt they previously entertained of their General, confirmed.

The account of the battle of San Jacinto was no less graphic and circumstantial. According to the pamphlet:

The Commander immediately passed from the 1st regiment to the extreme right of Millard's command, where he happened to receive a wound in the left leg, a little above the ankle joint. On receiving this wound he exclaimed: "By G—d, the reinforcements have arrived, Cos has come up, I'm killed, and all is lost!" At this time the soldiers were storming the enemy's works; the enemy was retreating in irreparable disorder, and had just crossed a ravine about 300 yards from their encampment. Houston approached and ordered a halt. "Halt," said he, "glory enough has been gained this day, and blood enough has been shed." At this moment Col. Wharton galloped up, and informed the General that Col. Sherman was closely engaging the enemy round that point of timber (pointing in that direction,) and "if you do not hasten to that spot all the glory will be his."

Sam Houston

"It is false," said Houston. "Sherman never came up." Wharton protested that it was a fact, and appealed to Col. Rusk, who had just joined them, for a confirmation of what he had said. Rusk assured the Commander that it was so. The General still pretended disbelief. Rusk observed a second time that such was the fact, and having heard the General's remark on the subject of bloodshed or on the sufficient quantity of glory that had on that day been won, observed, "Glory enough is not or will not be won, or blood enough shed whilst the enemy continue to fight; your order, General, cannot be obeyed."

The soldiers impatient at delay, in the ardor of their charge, and the moment of their victory, called out loudly, some, "Rusk, lead us on," others, "Wharton, lead us on." Col. Rusk assumed the command, ordered a right face, marched the men round the ravine and continued the action. Houston only observed, "I forbid the movement," and returned to the enemy's now evacuated encampment. One of the regular companies (Briscoe's, I believe,) followed the General, whether because he had forbid their advance, or whether to take care of the General's personal safety, I cannot say; from the manner and appearance of the General it was evident he was beside himself, and perhaps would have committed violence on his person (as it will be remembered he attempted to do at Bexar) if he had not been watched.

There is one more action of Houston's which I hold up to the reprobation of the lovers of their

Sam Houston

country. His Excellency, Gen. Houston, for and in consideration of the expense of a Champagne frolic at the house of Mr. Hall, at Marion, did barter and sell unto a Mr. Townsend, the office of Consul for Texas at New Orleans, and authorized him to charge as a fee of said office, two dollars to every emigrant on his way to this country. As I have said before, it is not at present my province to discuss the merits of his policy, I therefore make no remark on the institution of such a tax on the poor emigrant who is about to come amongst us, I confine myself to a statement of the fact. If General Houston will sell the place of a Consul for a sufficient quantity of champagne to gratify his beastly disposition to intoxication: would he not for gold and silver betray the dearest interests of the country that has confided in him?

There can be little doubt that ex-President Burnet was deeply concerned in the circulation of the pamphlet, for at a later period, and after Houston had casually referred to him as a "hog thief," he made a public statement very much along the lines of "A Farmer in the Army." The tenor of the Burnet attack may be judged by this excerpt: "General Houston has displayed some feats of gallantry, if rumor be true, among the dingy dames of the Cherokee tribe, but in his flight from Gonzales, his sexual gallantry forsook him, for he left many women and children crying behind him, and passed others heedlessly on

Sam Houston

the road." Burnet also dealt circumstantially with the San Jacinto battle, although himself in rapid retreat at the time, and gave this account of the engagement:

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Texian army was paraded. Col. Wharton arranged the order of battle, and they marched with alacrity to the onset. Gen. Houston, with a tolerable bearing, (he chewed opium in those days) rode in front of the line, until within about 400 yards, when he wheeled his horse half round and hollowed out "present and fire." By previous concert, the officers of the line had determined to reserve their fire until they could see "the white of the enemies' eyes," and when the hasty order was given, the word rushed along the line, "*hold on, boys, hold your fire, rush ahead.*" Houston advanced, and when within about 200 yards, he turned again, and in evident agitation, bawled out, "*God Almighty d—n you, ain't you going to f-i-r-e?*" The same cheering words passed along the line; the fire was reserved and Houston moved off to the right wing of the army.

Houston was soon afterwards wounded in the foot or ankle, but, I believe, rather slightly. He made, then and afterwards, a huge fuss about it. A calf will bellow at the prick of a bodkin. As soon as the ball struck him, he screamed out—"*Halt! Halt! Your General is wounded. Cos has come up and all is lost.*" But that army did not halt. Several of the officers called upon Gen. Rusk, the Secretary of War, who was in the field,

Sam Houston

to take the command and push ahead. Capt. Turner, commanding the only company of regulars present, was detailed to take charge of the wounded General, and the rest drove on the brief battle, to a noble victory. Gen. Houston never *advanced one step* after he was wounded; but he manifested a goodly portion of trepidation, as the tide of battle rolled from him.

A species of preacher, one James H. Perry, was another prize contributor to slander. Houston realized from the first that Perry, who had been appointed to the staff of the commander-in-chief at the request of the cabinet, was to spy on his movements, but even after catching him, refused to kick him out of camp. On the march to San Jacinto, Perry left camp under suspicious circumstances, and was captured and brought in by Henry Karnes, who reported that he had changed his horse's caparison, also his rifle for a Mexican musket. When Houston failed to give orders to have the prisoner shot, Karnes shook his head mournfully, and muttered, "I only wish I'd known it before I brung him in."

Perry remained under guard until the morning of the battle, at which time Houston had him released and his arms restored, telling him that he was being given a chance to clean his name of the shame that attached to it by reason of his arrest. When Perry was next heard from, it was in the Lamar-Burnet group, and not satisfied with spreading his lurid

Sam Houston

slanders throughout the length and breadth of Texas, he actually went East and lectured on Houston's cowardice and depravity.

Houston paid no attention whatsoever to the pamphlet or to the men who circulated its calumnies. It was ever his habit to treat attacks with lofty contempt, affecting the manner of a mastiff yapped at by snarling curs—a shrewd device that rarely failed to secure results. Not until 1859, when he was ending his second term in the United States Senate, did he touch upon any of the charges of cowardice and drug addiction, and then he seemed more interested in flaying his enemies than in defending himself. Only incidentally, and in a half-bored way, he introduced letters from fellow officers at San Jacinto that he had received years before, and had not troubled to publish.

So viciously and thoroughly had the politicians spread their lies that Lamar and his friends boasted openly that “Old Sam” was a dead cock in the pit, and the men in charge of the inauguration actually excluded the retiring president from all participation in the ceremonies. When the crowds gathered, however, they swept committee and arrangements to one side, and Houston, forced to appear, received a tremendous demonstration that conclusively proved his hold upon popular love and faith. As in the case of Washington, hounded and hated by the politicians, the people *knew*.

[XIX]

LAMAR BRINGS RUIN

HAD government been a mere matter of lute playing and lyrics, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar would have proved a great president, for he was essentially a troubadour. Yet even with all of his temperamental unfitness, his utter lack of administrative ability, his "grasshopper mind," it was still in his power to have served creditably, for Houston had pointed the path, and Lamar had but to follow. This, however, was exactly what he had no idea of doing! Driven by envy and vanity, he set out from the very first with no other policy than one of insane antagonism to everything for which Houston had stood.

Sneering at economy as a petty, penny-pinching business unworthy of empire builders, he talked grandly of a great national bank and put himself behind the issue of \$2,000,000 in treasury notes, a crack-brained proceeding that precipitated financial chaos; deriding peace, he shouted, "The boundary lines of the republic will be drawn with our sword," and denouncing Houston's attempts to bring about annexation, he ended a long prose poem with this declaration: "I

Sam Houston

cannot regard the annexation of Texas to the American Union in any other light than as the grave of all her hopes of happiness and greatness; and if, contrary to the present aspect of affairs, the amalgamation shall ever hereafter take place, I shall feel that the blood of our martyred heroes had been shed in vain—that we had riven the chains of Mexican despotism only to fetter our country with indissoluble bonds, and that a young republic just rising into high distinction among the nations of the earth had been swallowed up and lost, like a proud bark in a devouring vortex.”

Unwilling to remain in a town that bore the hated name of Houston, he succeeded in having Congress pass a law for the removal of the seat of government, and commissioners finally selected the site of the present capital, naming it after Austin. Ugly charges of graft and land speculation were freely made, for the new location was thirty-five miles away from Bastrop, eighty miles from San Antonio and two hundred miles from Houston. Not only did building materials have to be freighted long distances, but the infant community was so open to Indian attacks that the members of the government were oftentimes compelled to serve as night guards. To meet these extraordinary expenses, another flood of promissory notes deluged the unhappy country.

It was his “vigorous Indian policy,” however, that worked most woe to the distracted republic. The Cherokees owned large tracts of land between the

Sam Houston

Neches and the Sabine, and quitting the chase, had settled down to a peaceful agricultural life. In 1835, when Indian friendship was vital to the success of the Texas cause, the General Consultation had acknowledged the validity of the titles, giving the Cherokees solemn promise to "guarantee to them the peaceable enjoyment of their rights to the land as we do our own." It was this pledged faith that Lamar lost little time in repudiating, partly because his followers coveted the rich lands, but more because the Cherokees were "Houston's pet Indians."

The Indians were first ordered to surrender their gunlocks and then leave the country, and when an indignant refusal was returned, a force of seven hundred Texans set out on a campaign of extermination. Red men and white met in a battle to the death on July 14, 1839, but although the Indians fought well and valiantly, the odds against them were far too great. At the end, old Chief Bowles and his bravest warriors lay dead on the field, the village was in flames, and the wretched survivors fled across the prairies, homeless and hunted.

The Shawnees were then dispossessed, and after them, in due time, came the turn of the Comanches. In the course of a peace meeting, held in San Antonio, the assembled chieftains took alarm at some action of the Texans, and in the bloody grapple that followed, every Indian was killed, together with several squaws. Taking the warpath, the tribe soon exacted a bloody

Sam Houston

revenge, but the battle of Plum Creek was a rout, and a later engagement destroyed Comanche power. Striking their principal village in a surprise attack at dawn, the Texans killed and burned until only women and children were left to mourn among the ashes.

Houston was in the United States at the time of the descent upon the Cherokees, and on his return he attacked Lamar savagely as one who had shamed his country by cruelty and dishonor, and dealt no less scathingly with Albert Sidney Johnston, the secretary of war. The "vigorous policy," however, had met with general approval, for the average Texan had the true frontiersman's contempt for Indians, and Houston's denunciations met with a burst of popular anger that did not stop short of threats upon his life. Defying clamor, he continued his attacks, silencing hostile audiences by the stark force of his leonine personality, and chilling their resentment by bitter prophecy of the evils that were to come. Events soon bore out his predictions, for the Indians struck ruthlessly at isolated ranches and small communities, and again black fear rested upon the country as in the first days of settlement.

It was not only in terms of blood and terror that the "vigorous policy" took toll: there was also the money cost. The entire appropriations for Indian defense during Houston's term had been \$190,000 while Lamar's appropriations amounted to \$2,552,319. Even with this huge expenditure there was no safety,

Sam Houston

and not until Houston returned to office was the Indian menace lifted.

It was in the handling of international relations, however, that the egregious Lamar soared to heights of imbecility. First asking the United States to use its friendly offices with Mexico for the recognition of the independence of Texas, he no sooner received an affirmative answer than he decided upon direct action, appointed a minister plenipotentiary, and rushed him off to Mexico. Colonel Bernard M. Bee, selected for the post, had been a member of Santa Anna's escort on the trip to Washington, and proved his simple nature by lending the fallen dictator \$2,500. Santa Anna, of course, never repaid the loan, and the Texas Congress, by way of a gesture, voted Bee the money.

The gallant colonel, giving a new exhibition of invincible simplicity by accepting the post, got no farther than Vera Cruz, for Mexico foamed with rage at "the audacity of the Texas brigands in sending us their pedler to ask us to allow the peaceable possession of their robbery." Undeterred by this humiliation, Lamar then named a secret agent and special commissioner, who spent some unhappy months creeping from door to door in the City of Mexico.

Suddenly realizing that he was being insulted by Mexico, the headlong president decided upon a "vigorous policy," so eminently successful in the case of the Cherokees, and entered into negotiations with the rebellious state of Yucatan. Without troubling to con-

Sam Houston

sult Congress, he authorized a treaty that pledged the aid of Texas in Yucatan's fight for independence. To make good his word, seven warships were bought on credit, thus sinking the impoverished republic still deeper into the mire of insolvency, and this navy was sent across the gulf with a new burst of oratory.

The ill-fated Santa Fé expedition, however, may be set down as a crowning act of madness. The first Congress of Texas, still excited by San Jacinto, had fixed the northern boundary as the forty-second parallel of latitude, virtually including the whole of New Mexico, and it was this wild territorial claim that President Lamar now attempted to enforce. Various adventurers had assured him that the people were eager for Texan rule, and without further inquiry he announced a campaign that would "plant the banners of Texas on the cathedral of Santa Fé."

The scheme was submitted to Congress, accompanied by the usual rhetorical display, and might well have been approved by the crack-brains had it not been for Sam Houston, sitting at the time as a representative from Nacogdoches. Putting aside his pine stick and clasp-knife, for between debates it was his habit to fashion toys for children, he tore the crazy scheme to tatters. The population of New Mexico, he pointed out, was solidly Mexican, and not only would the expedition be regarded as an invasion, and resisted, but Mexico would undoubtedly be moved to a resumption of hostilities against Texas by the un-

Sam Houston

provoked attack upon one of her states. Even did circumstances justify the venture, it would still be folly, but undertaken at a time when Texas was in most desperate need of peace, when her resources were lowest, the expedition was a criminal stupidity that menaced the very future of the republic.

Congress, convinced against its will, refused Lamar the requested authorization, but the president was now completely possessed by his Napoleonic delusion, and plunged ahead in bold defiance of the vote. Money was snatched wherever it could be found, supplies were commandeered, and arms and munitions taken from the government arsenals, the prize confiscation being a cannon that bore upon the breech, stamped in flaring letters, the magic name of Mirabeau B. Lamar. At last all was in readiness, and on June 20, 1841, some three hundred adventurers—soldiers, teamsters and traders—set forth on the six-hundred-mile march to Santa Fé under command of General Hugh McLeod, Lamar's brother-in-law.

Only efficient in inefficiency, the president had left nothing undone to insure disaster. The summer season was the worst that could have been selected for the march, the stock of provisions was grossly inadequate, the guides provided were Mexicans, and with respect to size, the expedition was too large to pass as a peaceful trading-party, and too small for successful aggression. Gallantly enough, however, the doomed band rode away into the sunset on what was to be a

Sam Houston

last journey for the majority, and not until months later did Texas learn of their fate.

Almost from the first the expedition began to lose its way, on account of the treachery of the guides; lack of water proved a daily torment, provisions gave out, and when the borders of New Mexico were reached, the exhausted, half-starving Texans had lost their dream of conquest, and thought only of rescue. Such members of the expedition as still had strength were mounted on the few remaining horses, and sent forward to beg relief from the people that they had come to conquer. These ambassadors were quickly imprisoned, and Governor Armijo, marching to the camp of the suffering Texans, soon induced them to surrender under promises of fair treatment and a speedy release.

Whether Armijo would have kept his word is doubtful, for a more thoroughgoing rascal never lived, but in pawing through the papers taken from the captives, he found explicit instructions from Lamar for the formation of New Mexico into a territorial government. Peaceful traders indeed! Flying into a rage, he put the prisoners in irons, and sent them off on the long journey to the City of Mexico. Treated with every barbarity, beaten like beasts, and their ears cut off when they fell in their tracks, such as survived the terrible journey were put to work as street-sweepers.

So went the reckless days, folly piling upon folly,

Sam Houston

incompetency walking hand in hand with megalomania. All that Houston had accomplished was undone, and the unhappy republic sank deeper and deeper into debt and despair. Mail routes were discontinued, the public service demoralized, and government promissory notes fell to a value of two cents on the dollar. Houston had added only \$190,000 to the public debt during his term, and full value had been received; Lamar's addition was close to \$5,000,000 and all for worse than nothing.

Affairs finally reached a pass when even the irresponsible Congress felt that there was no point in further attempt to stem the tide of disaster, and after denouncing the administration as a tragic failure, prepared to adjourn *sine die*. As the motion was about to be made, Houston arose in his place, and such was the passion of his reproach that the shamed members returned to their seats and their duty. Even his enemies crowded about him as he sat down, crying that he had "saved the country."

The one gleam of light that shot through the darkness came from the friendly attitude of foreign powers. A treaty of amity, commerce and navigation was concluded with France in 1839, and a similar treaty was signed with Great Britain in 1840, together with a convention for British mediation between Mexico and Texas, and also a treaty for the suppression of the African slave trade. A commercial treaty with the Netherlands was also signed the same year.

Sam Houston

These negotiations had all been commenced during Houston's first term, and their successful conclusion was largely due to the stability achieved under the Houston régime.

As the ill-starred administration staggered from blunder to blunder, the embittered people recalled Lamar's boasts and pledges, and even his intimates dared say no word in defense. Forced at last to recognize his own utter incapacity, broken under the weight of public obloquy, the unhappy man abdicated the presidency in the last year of his term. Vice-President Burnet, with undisguised reluctance, took charge of the ruins, and poor Lamar, without even the spirit for a final burst of oratory, left the state and crept back to his old home in Georgia.

When the time arrived for a new election, the people turned to Houston with one accord, feeling that "Old Sam" was the only man able to "clean up the mess," and he was chosen for his second term by an overwhelming vote, taking office December 16, 1841. What gave the honor an added joy was that it came almost as a wedding present, for only the year before, Houston had married Miss Margaret Moffette Lea.

The two had first met in New Orleans at the time when Houston was being treated for his San Jacinto wound. Strangely enough, considering his tempestuous nature, Co-lon-neh the Rover was essentially domestic, for home and children were passions with him. There is evidence that he fell in love with the

Sam Houston

sweet-faced girl at the moment of meeting, but he knew himself to be twice her age, he was penniless, and Texas had little to offer a gently nurtured bride.

There was much correspondence, however, and various visits to the Lea home, and after many battles with his own misgivings, Houston proposed and was accepted. He was forty-seven at the time, and the bride only twenty-one, but despite the disparity in their ages, the union proved ideal, giving "Old San Jacinto" a comfort and happiness that he had never known.

Marriage also worked a very material change in Houston's habits, for his young wife was an ardent Christian, and concealed rare force of character under her soft aspect and air of gentleness. Although the name Big Drunk had ceased to be applicable from the day he left the Cherokees, riding away across the prairies to a new life, Houston was not a total abstainer by any means. Sprees were a fixed feature of Texas society, a recognized method of "blowing off steam," and he followed the fashion, sometimes bettering it by adding a Homeric note.

Profanity was also quite a gift with him when angered, and while many of his rages were artificial, carefully premeditated to further some stage effect, his hot temper and bitter tongue were not always under the best control. These were things that Mrs. Houston set out to change, and from the first her influence was plainly perceptible. Only in one respect

Sam Houston

did she fail to work a radical transformation, and that was in the matter of money. Utterly lacking the acquisitive impulse, and generous to the point of folly, Houston could never be induced to give up his habit of giving and lending, and there were many times when the harassed wife grappled with the problem of keeping a roof over their heads. In everything else he proved a devoted husband and fond father, holding his wife in loving reverence, his children close to his heart.

[XX]

SANTA ANNA'S GRATITUDE

THE conditions that faced Houston in 1841 were infinitely more depressing than those of 1836. Then he had the advantage, at least, of dealing with raw materials, but now he looked on ruin. Again, however, he gave proof of the sound common sense and capacity for patient, courageous drudgery that were in such striking contrast to his surface effect of headlong, passionate emotionalism. A score of times already this so-called "demagogue" had defied popular clamor and braved the anger of soldiers and citizens, and now he prepared an inaugural message that was in the spirit of a schoolmaster berating his pupils.

"We are not only without money," he said, "but without credit, and for want of punctuality, without character."

An immediate need was a sane financial system, and while forced to grant a new issue of paper money, Houston held it to \$200,000, and guaranteed it by three million acres of public land. The next step was economy, the thing that was most hateful to him in his private life. Lamar's payroll had been around

Sam Houston

\$175,000 a year; Houston cut the figure at once to \$33,000, reducing his own salary by half. All claims upon the public treasury, even the most just, were put aside until solvency could be regained.

Great was the bitterness of importunate creditors, but Houston stood firm. In some cases he fulminated, in others he appealed to patriotism, and when it was an old friend, he joked or cajoled. Putting his arm around one of them, he said: "Why, colonel, if it would do you any good, I'd give you half of my present fortune. At present, though, my only possessions are a stud horse, eating his head off in the stable, and a solitary gamecock without a hen to lay an egg."

In the midst of all these preoccupations, there came news of the tragic end of the Santa Fé expedition. When the grim story of treachery and murder and cruelty was fully heard, all Texas flamed into a fury of grief and indignation, and the cry for war was on every lip. Congress, by way of reprisal, extended the boundaries of the republic so as to include Chihuahua, Sonora, New Mexico, Upper and Lower California, and large portions of Coahuila, Durango, Sinaloa and Tamaulipas, insisting that title be made good by the sword.

It was a senseless gesture, and Houston, with his usual calm disregard of public wrath, promptly vetoed it. As in the case of dueling, he saw small point in fighting unless something vital was to be gained from it, and every circumstance of Texas rendered her

Sam Houston

unready for a struggle. In his veto, Houston pointed out that the measure, if allowed to stand, would add to the danger of the Santa Fé prisoners, earn the ridicule of other nations, and still further embitter the relations between Texas and Mexico.

"So long as we are not on amicable terms with Mexico," he said, "so long will we suffer hindrance to our prosperity. The constant cry of invasion will be sounded, not only throughout Texas, but throughout all nations to whom we are known; and while this is the case, we may feel confident that immigration will be impeded, if not entirely prevented. . . . Texas only requires peace to make her truly prosperous and respectable. Peace will bring with it every advantage."

In Mexico, however, Santa Anna had once again returned to power, and war with Texas appealed to him as a short cut to popular favor. Seizing upon the Santa Fé expedition as an excuse for his repudiation of the San Jacinto treaties, he announced that he meant to reclaim Texas from thieves and usurpers, declaring that "if it were an unproductive desert, useless, sterile, yielding nothing desirable and abounding only in thorns to wound the feet of the traveler, I would not permit it to exist as an independent government in derision of our national character, our hearths, and our individuality."

As a result of this determination, General Rafael Vasquez hurried across the Rio Grande with seven

Sam Houston

hundred soldiers, and on March 6, 1842, took possession of San Antonio by a surprise attack. The raiding detachment retreated almost as quickly as it came, and although Houston called for volunteers, he realized the raid as a gesture, and refused to authorize any reprisal. As a sop to public opinion, however, he addressed a scorching letter to Santa Anna, in which, after disproving the dictator's claim that the San Jacinto treaties had been forced from him by "the rifles of a tumultuous soldiery," he ended with this high-flown threat: "Believe me, sir, ere the banner of Mexico shall float triumphantly on the banks of the Sabine, the Texan standard of the single star, borne by the Anglo-Saxon race, shall display its bright folds in liberty's triumph on the Isthmus of Darien."

As Santa Anna continued to breathe fire, however, the apprehensions of the Texans forced Houston to call a special session of Congress in June, but even while doing so, he made it clear that he was opposed to warlike measures, not only because he deemed them unnecessary, but because there was not one cent in the treasury to meet the expenses of a campaign. Notwithstanding this plain statement, Congress straightway passed a bill investing Houston with dictatorial powers, authorized the formation of an army, and appropriated 10,000,000 acres of public land to furnish the sinews of war.

It was no more than a flourish, but the people, wild with the war fever, were a unit in approving the ac-



SANTA ANNA

Sam Houston

tion, and as the rumor spread that Houston was preparing another veto, a whirlwind of rage swept the country. Ancient enemies cried out against a spineless president, armed men filled the capital, threats of assassination were openly made, and even close friends fell away, afraid that they also might be brought down to destruction. As if to show his contempt for the threats against his life, Houston's veto message was more than usually savage in its unsparing denunciation of congressional stupidity, and under the whip of his words, the mob leaders crept back to their homes.

All might have ended well but for Santa Anna's own precarious situation. Faced by the usual revolt against his extortions and tyrannies, he felt that a Texas war was his one hope, and in September, General Woll and eight hundred men were ordered to make a second raid. San Antonio was captured by a surprise attack, but after making prisoners of fifty-four citizens, virtually the entire male population, the cautious Woll beat a rapid retreat. Popular clamor forced Houston to issue a call for volunteers, but still convinced that the raids were designed only to annoy, and did not mean war, he gave secret instructions that no serious reprisal should be attempted. As a consequence, General Somerville led 750 men up and down the Rio Grande for a month, and then announced the end of the campaign.

Three hundred, however, refused to accept the order,

Sam Houston

and crossing the river, delivered a successful attack on the town of Mier. Unfortunately, General Ampudia came up with heavy reinforcements, and not all the reckless valor of the Texans availed against two thousand Mexicans. After a day and night of fighting, provisions and ammunition both gave out, and they surrendered under pledge of treatment as prisoners of war, and the specific condition that they should not be sent to Santa Anna. With the usual disregard for such pledges, Ampudia at once began herding his prisoners along the road to the City of Mexico.

Near the mountain town of Saltillo, Captain Ewan Cameron led a brilliant dash that overpowered the guards, but unhappily a wrong turn in the road carried the fugitives into the mountains. Five days they wandered barren ranges, lacking both food and water, many dying and others going mad, and when a troop of Mexican cavalry came in pursuit, the starving, thirst-tormented Texans were not able to offer resistance. No sooner had they been returned to the Hacienda del Salado, the scene of their escape, than word came from Santa Anna, ordering every tenth man to be shot.

Of the original 193, only 176 remained, and as his method of selection, the Mexican commander put 159 white beans and 17 black ones in an earthen pot. Heavily ironed, the prisoners advanced in single file,

Sam Houston

and each in turn made the draw upon which depended his life or death. All were still weak from their terrible experience in the mountains, but not a man showed fear either by the trembling of a hand or the quiver of a lip, and when the seventeen took their places before a firing squad, the last request was that their eyes should not be bandaged.

Together with the Mexican forays and their contributions to confusion and excitement, Houston also had an Indian problem on his hands. It was not only that the many savage raids terrorized the country and discouraged immigration; in event that Santa Anna did begin to wage war in earnest, it was imperative that he should not have the Indians as allies. Leaving Vice-President Burleson to run the government, Houston mounted a horse and rode five hundred miles of frontier; such tribes as he was not able to visit were sent long letters by trusted messengers.

It was a trying task, for all the Texas tribes still seethed with memory of Lamar's cruelties and repudiations, but Houston's popularity and reputation for honest dealing swung the decision in his favor, and peace treaties were finally framed and signed. His "Indian talks," as they were called, often reached a high pitch of eloquence and poetic imagery, as evidenced by the following example, which proved that he had not forgotten the lessons learned around the council fires of the Cherokees:

Sam Houston

Washington, October 13, 1842.

TO THE RED BEAR AND CHIEFS OF THE COUNCIL

MY BROTHERS:—The path between us is open; it has become white. We wish it to remain open, and that it shall no more be stained with blood. The last Council took brush out of our way. Clouds no longer hang over us, but the sun gives life to our footsteps. Darkness is taken away from us, and we can look at each other as friends. I send councilors with my talk. They will give it to you. Hear it and remember my words. I have never opened my lips to tell a red brother a lie. My red brethren who know me will tell you that my counsel has always been for peace; that I have eaten bread and drunk water with the red men. They listened to my words, and were not troubled. A bad chief came in my place, and told them lies, and did them much harm. His counsel was listened to, and the people did evil. His counsel is no more heard, and the people love peace with their red brothers. You, too, love peace; and you wish to kill the buffalo for your women and children. . . .

Bad men make trouble; they cannot be at peace, but when the water is clear they will disturb it, and make it muddy. The Mexicans have lately come to San Antonio and brought war with them. We drove them out of the country; they fled in sorrow. If they come back again, they shall no more leave our country, or it will be after they have been taken prisoners. Their coming has disturbed us, and for that reason I cannot go to the Council to meet you, as I had in-

Sam Houston

tended. But my friends that I send to you will tell you all things, and make a treaty with you that I will look upon, and rejoice at. You will counsel together. They will bring me all the words that you speak to them. The Great Spirit will hear the words that I speak to you, and He will know the truth of the words that you send to me. When the truth is spoken His countenance will rejoice; but before him who speaketh lies the Great Spirit will place darkness, and will not give light to his going. Let all the red men make peace; let no man injure his brother; let us meet every year in council that we may know the hearts of each other. . . .

If the Big Musk is in the Council, he knows my words, and he knows my counsel was always that of a brother; and that I never deceived my red brothers, the Cherokees. They had much sorrow and trouble brought upon them, but it was done by chiefs whose counsel was wicked, and I was far off and could not hinder the mischief that was brought upon his people. . . .

Let the war-whoop be no more heard in our prairies. Let songs of joy be heard upon our hills. In our valleys let there be laughter and in our wigwams, let the voices of our women and children be heard. Let trouble be taken away from us; and when our warriors meet together, let them smoke the pipe of peace and be happy.

Your brother,

SAM HOUSTON.

Sam Houston

Throughout these trying times, when every ounce of his energy was needed for tremendous importances the harassed president was bedeviled at every turn by domestic discord and insubordination. As a consequence of the Mexican raids, he had deemed it wise to remove the government to Houston, and then to Washington, but when he sent for the archives, the citizens of Austin opposed an armed resistance.

His effort to exercise authority over the operations of the navy was also met with open defiance. One of his first acts had been to end Lamar's alliance with rebellious Yucatan, but when he ordered the commodore of the fleet to repair to Galveston, a flat refusal was returned. Houston then induced Congress to authorize the sale of the war vessels, but the mutinous commodore not only refused to give possession, but actually sailed away again to Yucatan to assist the rebels in repelling a Mexican assault on the port of Campeche. Houston's answer was a proclamation that branded him as a pirate, but that marked the extent of his power.

The one helpful, encouraging happening of these gloomy times was a sudden change of attitude on the part of the United States. Texas bought some war supplies in New York, and this, together with various mass meetings of protest against the treatment of the Santa Fé prisoners, gave Santa Anna a pretext for accusing President Tyler of bad faith. Through his

Sam Houston

minister in Washington, Bocanegra, he charged "conduct openly at variance with the most sacred principles of the law of nations and the solemn compacts of amity existing between the two countries"; and made the threat that continuance of the course would be held as "a positive act of hostility." Goaded to anger by his impudence, Daniel Webster, Secretary of State, delivered the following masterly answer:

Mexico may have chosen to consider, and may still choose to consider, Texas as having been at all times since 1836, and as still continuing, a rebellious province; but the world has been obliged to take a very different view of the matter. From the time of the battle of San Jacinto, in April, 1836, to the present moment, Texas has exhibited the same external signs of national independence as Mexico herself, and with quite as much stability of government. Practically free and independent, acknowledged as a political sovereignty by the principal powers of the world, no hostile foot finding rest within the territory for six or seven years, and Mexico herself refraining for all that period from any further attempt to reestablish her own authority over that territory, it cannot be but surprising to find Mr. de Bocanegra complaining that for that whole period citizens of the United States or its Government have been favoring the rebels of Texas and supplying them with vessels, ammunition and money, as if the war for the reduction

Sam Houston

of the Province of Texas had been constantly prosecuted by Mexico, and her success prevented by these influences from abroad. . . .

Since 1837 the United States have regarded Texas as an independent sovereignty as much as Mexico, and trade and commerce with citizens of a government at war with Mexico cannot on that account be regarded as an intercourse by which assistance and succor are given to Mexican rebels. The whole current of Mr. de Bocanegra's remarks runs in the same direction, as if the independence of Texas had not been acknowledged. It has been acknowledged; it was acknowledged in 1837 against the remonstrance and protest of Mexico, and most of the acts of any importance of which Mr. de Bocanegra complains flow necessarily from that recognition. He speaks of Texas as still being "an integral part of the territory of the Mexican Republic," but he cannot but understand that the United States do not so regard it. The real complaint of Mexico, therefore, is in substance neither more nor less than a complaint against the recognition of Texas independence. It may be thought rather late to repeat that complaint, and not quite just to confine it to the United States to the exemption of England, France and Belgium, unless the United States, having been the first to acknowledge the independence of Mexico herself, are to be blamed for setting an example for the recognition of Texas. . . . The Constitution, public treaties, and the laws oblige the President to regard Texas

Sam Houston

as an independent state, and its territory as no part of the territory of Mexico.

It was fortunate indeed for Texas that Webster did not possess the gift of foresight, for had he been able to look ahead, and see the embarrassment that this letter would bring upon him, there is grave doubt as to whether he would have written it. Two years later, when the annexation of Texas was before the Senate of the United States, the Whigs were to insist that Texas was *not* a free agent, and that she could *not* dispose of herself without the consent of Mexico. Webster, first, last and always a partizan, made every valiant effort to explain away his letter to Bocanegra, but without other result than a distinct hurt to his own reputation.

At the time of its writing, however, American sentiment applauded the rebuke of Mexican impudence, and Santa Anna himself was silenced by its stern logic. No change was worked in the Texas situation, however, for the dictator's debaucheries had robbed him of all capacity for intelligent thought or action. Having emptied the treasury by his persistent pillage, he now proceeded to sell the tobacco monopoly to private parties, and then disposed of the government's third interest in a rich mine that had been netting an annual income of \$50,000.

Stealing with both hands, blackmailing like any

Sam Houston

common criminal, squandering his loot on orgies, crushing protest by arrests and execution, he brought his shame to a climax by leaving the funeral services of his wife to marry a fifteen-year-old girl. His one sop to public opinion was an insistent clamor that he was preparing to reclaim Texas, even if it meant war with the "Colossus of the North," and every day he pledged himself to send armies to the Rio Grande.

[XXI]

HOUSTON PLAYS WORLD POLITICS

PRIDE and courage were Houston's distinguishing characteristics, yet in spite of both, Mexico's attitude and chaotic domestic conditions forced the conclusion that Texas must receive aid from the outside if the republic was to endure. But for Lamar's administration, the storms could have been weathered; as it was, an empty treasury and a huge public debt precluded any possibility of an adequate military establishment, yet an army was imperatively necessary if Santa Anna persisted in his threats of war. Even if dismissed as mere gestures, they discouraged immigration and kept the country in a turmoil that prevented progress and development.

Where was this aid to come from? England, while promising much, had done little, and the United States, held back by the abolitionists, had not shown even the friendly feeling that might have been expected from people of the same blood. In the new American attitude, however, as set forth in Webster's letter, Houston saw an opening that might well lead to success. Would it not be possible to pit the two powers

Sam Houston

against each other, playing upon their long-standing jealousies and opposed interests? If England could be made to believe that Texas was about to be annexed to the United States, and if the United States could be made to believe that Texas was planning an offensive and defensive alliance with England, what more certain than that profit to Texas would come out of it?

His mind made up, his shrewd plan fully formed, Houston addressed the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France on October 15, 1842, asking them to require of Mexico either the recognition of the independence of Texas or to make war upon her according to the rights established and unanimously recognized by civilized nations. "All her boasted threats of invasion have resulted in nothing more than fitting out and sending into the most exposed portions of our territory petty marauding parties, for the purpose of pillaging and harassing the weak and isolated settlements on our western border." In conclusion he said:

If Mexico believes herself able to subjugate this country, her right to make the effort to do so is not denied, for, on the contrary, if she chooses to invade our territory for that purpose the President, in the name of the people of all Texas, will bid her welcome. It is not against a war with Mexico that Texas would protest. This she deprecates not. She is willing at any

Sam Houston

time to stake her existence as a nation upon the issue of a war conducted on Christian principles. It is alone against the unholy, inhuman, and fruitless character it has assumed and still maintains, which violates every rule of honorable warfare, every precept of religion, and sets at defiance even the common sentiments of humanity, against which she protests, and invokes the interposition of those powerful nations which have recognized her independence.

All took the bait, each fearing to let the other prove the warmer friend. The United States proposed concerted action, but Great Britain quickly insisted that "it would be better, on all accounts, that each party act separately, but similarly in tone, in point of time and arguments." Having thus excluded her principal rival for the favor of Texas, England then hastened to make secret arrangements for a concert with France, equally interested in blocking America's further expansion.

Houston was now ready for the second move of his game. In order that Great Britain might be worked to the proper pitch, he instructed Van Zandt, the Texas minister in Washington, to suggest the reopening of annexation discussions, while he himself wrote personally to Murphy, representative of the United States in Texas: "I find as news reaches me from both the United States and Texas, that the subject of annexation is one that has claimed much atten-

Sam Houston

tion, and is well received. Even the eldest settlers, even some of the original three hundred, are as anxious for the event to take place as any that I meet with."

Captain Elliott, the British agent in Texas, was allowed to gain fullest knowledge of these actions, and his government, much alarmed, straightway brought such pressure to bear upon Mexico that Santa Anna agreed to an armistice on June 15, 1843. Now it was the turn of President Tyler to be stimulated, and to Van Zandt Houston wrote: "The United States having taken no definite action in this matter, and there now being an increased prospect of an adjustment of our difficulties with Mexico, the President deems it advisable to take no further action at present in reference to annexation." Further dispatches, deliberately intended for the eyes of American leaders, told enthusiastically of Houston's plans for an alliance with European powers.

All of this, while shrewd enough, might well have come to naught had William Henry Harrison lived to serve out his term. John Tyler, the new President, had been a Democrat before deserting to the Whigs, and as the very first acts of his administration enraged and alienated his new bedfellows, he found himself a "man without a party." Looking around for some helpful issue, he decided that the annexation of Texas might possibly prove a short cut to popularity. The South would approve, as a matter of course, and the

Sam Houston

North could not well object to a course that would prevent England from gaining control of the Texas cotton production, as well as a monopoly of the gulf trade, both threats against the Monroe Doctrine.

In September, therefore, his Secretary of State, Abel Upshur, *suggested* that annexation discussions be opened at once, and when Houston returned no reply whatsoever, Upshur wrote a note in October that *proposed* discussions. Mexico, hearing of the correspondence, flew into a characteristic passion, and announced that annexation would be equivalent to an act of war. In his December message to Congress, however, Tyler dismissed Mexico's fulminations as dle vapping, and showed himself determined to proceed.

It now behooved Houston to study the diplomatic chessboard with considerable care. England, aided by France, was working to have Mexico recognize the independence of Texas, but both nations might possibly lapse into indifference if Texas broke off negotiations with the United States. On the other hand, Tyler's support of annexation, while helpful, was not all-powerful by any means. Texas, to be able to rely upon the United States, must have explicit assurances that the Senate stood behind Tyler. Deciding, therefore, that he could afford to rebuff the United States until Tyler stood ready to make a positive offer, Houston gave Van Zandt these instructions on December 13:

Sam Houston

The interposition of foreign friendly governments, by which an Armistice has been established between Texas and Mexico, and the prospect of a permanent peace with that power given, has been extended by the particular governments mostly influential in obtaining these most desirable results chiefly with a view that, in the event of Mexico's agreeing to acknowledge the independence of Texas, she would continue to exist as a separate and independent nation. . . . The President thinks that, in the present state of our foreign relations, it would not be politic to abandon the expectations which now exist of a speedy settlement of our difficulties with Mexico through the good offices of other powers, for the very uncertain prospect of annexation to the United States, however desirable that event, if it could be consummated, might be. Were Texas to agree to a treaty of annexation, the good office of these powers would, it is believed, be immediately withdrawn, and were the treaty then to fail of ratification of the Senate of the United States, Texas would be placed in a much worse situation than she is at present, nor could she again ask or hope for any interposition in her behalf, either by England or France; and with our consequent supposed dependence upon the United States, might again return to the apathy and indifference towards us which has always, until now, characterized that Government. . . . In making a communication of this determination to the Government of the United States, it will be proper to inform that Government that whenever the Con-

Sam Houston

gress or Senate of the United States shall throw wide open the door to annexation, by a resolution authorizing the President of that country to propose a treaty for that purpose, the proposition will be immediately submitted to the representatives of the people of this country, and promptly responded to on the part of its Government.

Along with this communication, Houston informed Captain Elliott, that annexation was not being seriously considered by Texas, and that he was sincerely grateful for England's past efforts and wished them continued. The letter concluded with the soothing information that England "might rest assured that, with the independence of Texas recognized by Mexico, he would never consent to any treaty or other project of annexation to the United States, and had a conviction that the people would sustain him in that determination."

No whit daunted, Upshur wrote a note in January, 1844, that was virtually an ultimatum. This note was laid before Houston in early February, and changed circumstances forced the president to adopt an entirely new attitude. The armistice negotiations, from which so much had been hoped, had ceased to hold out any promise, for Santa Anna, facing another revolution, did not dare to run counter to popular prejudice by open surrender of Mexico's claim to Texas. As a consequence, Houston gave Upshur a cordial and conciliatory answer, and after further exchange of

Sam Houston

notes, J. Pinckney Henderson was sent to Washington to cooperate with Van Zandt in negotiating a proper treaty.

Although forced into this acquiescence, Houston was not blind to the dangers of the situation, for while the parleys were certain to offend England and France, and add to Mexico's anger, there was strong likelihood that Tyler would not be able to push a treaty through the Senate. Already the North was ablaze with excitement, John Quincy Adams declaring that "the annexation of Texas to this Union is the first step to the conquest of all Mexico, of the West Indies, of a maritime, colonizing, slave-tainted monarchy, and of extinguished freedom."

A fanatic, and utterly reckless of the truth when his partizanship took fire, Adams repeated all of the old Mayo lies, stating it as a fact that Houston had resigned as Governor of Tennessee under orders from Andrew Jackson, that he had gone straight to Texas to kindle an internal insurrection for the purpose of separating the province from Mexico, that the whole devilish business was a conspiracy of the slave-holding interests, and that Houston was their head devil and the drunken and depraved successor of Aaron Burr.

These hackneyed falsehoods, each clearly disproved by a plain record, were followed by open threats of secession, an example that the South was to follow sixteen years later. A circular, signed by Adams and twelve fellow congressmen, insisted that "no act of

Sam Houston

Congress, or treaty of annexation, could impose the least obligation upon the several states of this Union, to submit to such an unwarrantable act, or to receive into their family and fraternity such misbegotten illegitimate progeny." The precious document ended with the outright declaration that Tyler's insistence on the "nefarious project would be identical with dissolution."

Distinctly alarmed by this show of passionate opposition, Houston ordered Van Zandt and Henderson to be given explicit and positive instructions that not only should Texas be assured of protection against Mexican attack during the progress of the negotiations, but that the United States *must be prepared to guarantee the independence of Texas in event of the Senate's failure to ratify a treaty*. Upshur, unfortunately, met his death in an accident, and John C. Calhoun, the new Secretary of State, was an entirely different type. As plausible as imperious, he dominated Henderson and Van Zandt to a point where they signed a treaty on April 12 without other guarantees than Calhoun's personal assurances.

Houston's fury knew no bounds when word came that the Texan representatives had disobeyed his instructions in every vital particular. The very thing that he had feared, and that he had tried to guard against, was now come to pass, and in event that the Senate rejected the treaty, Texas stood alone, humiliated and friendless. Cursing Henderson and Van

Sam Houston

Zandt, however, was without power to work a change, and with as good a grace as possible he accepted the situation. He did, however, issue this warning in a letter to them:

I have felt and yet feel great solicitude for our fate. The crisis of Texas is everything. To the United States it is worth its Union. My toil has constantly been for the freedom and happiness of mankind, and if we are annexed, I shall hope we have accomplished much, but if from any cause, we should be rejected, we must redouble our energies, and the accompanying duplicate will express to you decisively what my purposes are. Texas can become Sovereign and independent, founded upon her own incalculable advantages of situation, and sustained by European influences without the slightest compromittal to her nationality. If the present measure of Annexation should fail entirely, and we are to be thrown back upon our own resources, fix your eye steadily on the salvation of Texas, and pursue the course which I have indicated. I again declare to you that every day which passes only convinces me more clearly that it is the last effort at Annexation that Texas will ever make, nor do I believe that any solicitation of guarantee from the United States would at any future day induce her to consent to the measure.

Moving quickly, for he felt that it was a case of "now or never," Tyler laid the treaty before the Senate on April 22 with these supporting reasons:

Sam Houston

The question narrowed down to the simple proposition whether the United States should accept the boon of annexation upon fair and even liberal terms, or, by refusing to do so, force Texas to seek refuge in the arms of some other power, either through a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, or the adoption of some other expedient which might virtually make her tributary to such power and dependent upon it for all future time. . . . Texas voluntarily steps forth, upon terms of perfect honor and good faith to all nations, to ask to be annexed to the Union. As an independent sovereignty her right to do this is unquestionable. In doing so she gives no cause of umbrage to any other power; her people desire it, and there is no slavish transfer of her sovereignty and independence. She has for eight years maintained her independence against all efforts to subdue her. She has been recognized as independent by many of the most prominent of the family of nations, and that recognition, so far as they are concerned, places her in a position, without giving any just cause of umbrage to them, to surrender her sovereignty of her own will and pleasure.

Contrary to Tyler's hopes, the annexation question was denied consideration on its merits, and became the football of politics. Webster, figuring that Clay, his principal rival for the Whig nomination, would have to be for annexation by reason of his Southern report, turned squarely around, swallowing the Bocanegra

Sam Houston

correspondence in one great gulp, and became the project's most determined foe. Clay, however, was of the opinion that he could hold the South, no matter what happened, and decided to take a position against annexation by way of currying favor with the North. Van Buren, seemingly assured of the Democratic nomination, also decided to straddle the issue and declared against the treaty as inopportune, although upholding the *right* to annex.

Clay was nominated by the Whigs in May, easily defeating Webster, but the too astute Van Buren discovered that he had underestimated the Texas sentiment, for James K. Polk, a dark horse, was named by the Democrats on a platform that contained this plank: "Resolved, that our title to the whole of the territory of Oregon is clear and unquestionable: that no portion of the same ought to be ceded to England or any other power, and that the reoccupation of Oregon and the reannexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period are great American measures."

Throughout these trying days, Houston sat impotent, his anger mounting as he listened to denunciations of himself and his people, for the Whigs delighted in holding Texas up to the world as an outlaw den filled with the dregs of society. With every new attack he grew increasingly fixed in his fierce determination that it would be the last humiliation that Texas would invite. Already his bold mind had conceived the idea of a great independent empire, and

Sam Houston

that he reasoned well stands proved by the following letter to Murphy, the American minister, written in May:

If faction or a regard for present party advantages should defeat the measure, you may depend upon one thing and that is, that the glory of the United States has already culminated. A rival power will soon be built up, and the Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, will be component parts of Texas in thirty years from this date. The Oregon region in geographical affinity will attach to Texas. By this coalition or union the barrier of the Rocky Mountains will be dispensed with or obviated. England and France in such an event would not be so tenacious on the subject of Oregon as if the United States were to be the sole possessor of it. When such an event would take place, or in anticipation of such a result, all the powers which either envy or fear the United States would use all reasonable exertion to build us up as the only rival power which now can exist on this continent to that of the United States. . . . The union of Oregon and Texas will be much more natural and convenient than for either separately to belong to the United States. This, too, would place Mexico at the mercy of such a power as Oregon and Texas would form; such an event may appear fanciful to many, but I assure you that there are no Rocky Mountains interposing to such a project. But one thing can prevent its accomplishment, and that is annexation. If you, or any statesman, will only regard

Sam Houston

the map of North America, you will perceive that from the forty-sixth degree of latitude north there is the commencement of a natural boundary. This will embrace Oregon, and from thence South, on the Pacific Coast, to the twenty-ninth or thirtieth degree south latitude will be a natural and convenient extent of sea-land. I am free to admit that most of the province of Chihuahua, Sonora, and Upper and Lower California, as well as Santa Fé, which we now claim, will have to be brought into the connection with Texas and Oregon. This, you will see by reference to the map, is no bugbear to those who will reflect upon the achievement of the Anglo-Saxon people. . . . It may be urged that these matters are remote. Be it so. Statesmen are intended by their forecast to regulate and arrange matters in such sort as will give direction to events by which the future is to be benefited or prejudiced.

The north Mexican states—Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Sonora—seethed with rebellion, and had repeatedly proposed the project of a federation to Houston, and as for California and New Mexico, the war of 1846 proved that Mexican rule over these provinces was a mere shadow. Kearny captured Santa Fé without the firing of a shot, and the conquest of California was marked by no more than a series of skirmishes. By no means, therefore, was Houston's plan an idle dream.

With the party conventions out of the way, the Sen-

Sam Houston

ate returned to consideration of the treaty. The Whigs, now firmly committed against annexation, opposed a solid front, and soon received powerful aid from an unexpected source. Arrogant Senator Benton, furious against Tyler and Calhoun for what he deemed a betrayal of Van Buren, announced his opposition to the treaty, and succeeded in winning various other Democratic senators to his support. The amazing theory upon which he based his antagonism was that Texas, although a free and independent republic for nine years, and so admitted by the nations of the world, could not dispose of herself without Mexico's consent.

Under these conditions, the treaty went to a vote on June 8, and was defeated by 35 to 16. Strangely enough, considering the fact that slavery was assumed to be the heart of the discussion, the vote was non-sectional, for Illinois and Pennsylvania were solidly affirmative, with New Hampshire divided, while Georgia, North Carolina and Missouri, strong Southern states, split their votes.

[XXII]

ENGLAND AND FRANCE CONSPIRE

THE rejection of the treaty came as a crushing blow to the pride of Texas. The people, denounced as "scoundrels, speculators and adventurers," were bitter enough, but Sam Houston had the added humiliation of having been outplayed in a game of his own choosing. So deep was his resentment that even Andrew Jackson, the one man that he bowed before, was not able to soften it. When Old Hickory wrote an expression of sincere regret, together with a prophecy that annexation would triumph eventually, Houston answered that he was glad to have Texas "free from all involvements and pledges," and that in his opinion, she should maintain her independent position. Twice his country had presented herself to the United States "as a bride adorned for the espousal," and twice had she been spurned. A third rejection was not to be contemplated.

Turning definitely away from the United States, the Texas president now gave himself unreservedly to the dream of a great republic such as he had outlined in his letter to Murphy—a mighty empire stretching

Sam Houston

from ocean to ocean. A period of uninterrupted peace, permitting growth and greater strength, was the one immediate requirement. This, he figured, could easily be gained by an offensive and defensive alliance with Great Britain and France. These powers, to be sure, were in bad humor, feeling that they had been used as pawns in the game, but a frank explanation of the circumstances would undoubtedly restore their former enthusiasm. As a result of Houston's new calculations, Ashbel Smith, the Texan chargé d'affaires at the Court of St. James, was given these instructions:

The treaty for the annexation of Texas to the United States having been rejected, the attention of the government is again turned to our relations with Mexico. . . . The intelligence of the British and French governments will not fail to make them perceive the importance of an early and decisive action on their part in reference to a settlement of the difficulties between this country and Mexico, and the establishment of our unconditional independence through their influence.

You will bring this matter at once to the consideration of both Cabinets, and ascertain what offers (if any) they are disposed to make, based upon an assurance from Texas that she will maintain her National unity; and upon an advantageous reciprocal commercial arrangement, between Texas and either or both of those countries. Should England or France, singly or in concert,

Sam Houston

be disposed to enter into any negotiations on this subject, it is the wish of the Government to be informed of it through you as early as possible, and that their agents here should be instructed to enter at once upon negotiations with full powers to conclude the same.

Smith's advances were warmly received by both England and France, for both powers were as one in their hatred of annexation. New conversations developed agreement that Texas must be built up into an independent state to check the expansion of the United States, and in late June, Smith was informed that a "Diplomatic Act" would be entered into by England and France, guaranteeing independence to Texas in return for her pledge not to seek territory beyond the Rio Grande or accept annexation by the United States. Mexico would be compelled to approve the agreement, if unwilling, and the United States could do as it would. Smith, carefully recording the conversation, wrote that "the terms, effect and possible consequences to the several parties to it (including, of course, a possible war) were naturally considered, fully discussed and clearly understood between Lord Aberdeen and the minister of Texas. Both Louis Phillippe and Guizot stated that France would join in the act."

Following the Anglo-French agreement on the Diplomatic Act, Lord Aberdeen sent a memorandum to Bankhead, Great Britain's minister in Mexico, in-

Sam Houston

structing him to lay this information before Santa Anna: "England and France shall also guarantee to Mexico the Californias, New Mexico and the other points of the northern frontier bordering on the United States, according to a treaty to be drawn up for that purpose. If the United States carry into effect the annexation of Texas to the North American Union, England and France will assist Mexico in the contest which may be thereby brought on."

Undoubtedly it was action of a far more aggressive kind than Houston had anticipated, carrying a definite threat of war against the United States, but when the matter came to him for decision he did not hesitate. The American people had been given their chance, and the welfare of Texas was now his one consideration. With his own hand he wrote this note to Anson Jones, the secretary of state: "Let our representatives be instructed to complete the proposed arrangements for the settlement of our Mexican difficulties as soon as possible, giving the necessary pledges."

The purely accidental quality that so often figures in human affairs, the manner in which tremendous plans are turned awry by some circumstance so small as to have been unforeseen, was never more aptly illustrated than by the events that followed Houston's note. Jones, looked upon by the president as a little mouse-man, a serviceable clerk whose conscientiousness made up for his pompous dulness, took advantage of Houston's absence to disregard the instructions, and

Sam Houston

instead of telling Ashbel Smith to give assent to the Diplomatic Act, sent word for him to come home.

Jones was originally a New England doctor and druggist, and had served as an assistant surgeon in Houston's army. A small soul, it was still the case that his solemn port and oracular manner of delivering platitudes established him as a "mighty deep man" among his simple neighbors, and various offices were accorded him. Like all strong presidents, Houston wanted a rubber-stamp secretary of state, and when he looked around at the commencement of his second term, his eye fell on Anson Jones.

There can be no question that the giant frontiersman, impatient, imperious and oftentimes profane, must have rubbed raw the prim, precise New Englander, fully convinced that he was by far the greater man, and as an outlet for his rage and hate and swollen vanity, poor Jones turned to the solace of all petty, vainglorious minds, starting a diary. No matter how bitter the day, at night, behind a locked door, he could restore his self-esteem and vent his smoldering resentments by filling page after page with venomous comment and pathetic brag.

In this diary, published years later, Houston figured as a miserable creature "without dignity of character, without principle of any kind, and altogether reckless." At every point Jones portrayed himself as one accepting office only "to save the country from utter ruin and annihilation," and always there was a moan

Sam Houston

about his constant sacrifice of himself "for the welfare of Texas and her institutions," and the ingratitude of the people. In the letter offering the appointment, Houston had assured Jones that he would find "worthy associates in the cabinet," and the vain doctor set this down as a "pledge" that he would be permitted to name the cabinet. When he was not even consulted as to the selections, he rushed to his diary and indicted Houston for his dishonor in repudiating a solemn agreement. "General Houston and I," he recorded austere, "are drifting away from each other hourly."

Worst of all was a constant whining, sniveling pretense of high purpose and purity of motive. After every mean, vicious characterization of Houston, it was his habit to add a few paragraphs such as these: "It is not pleasant for me to say these things of one whom I would not wrong, and whom I have praised whenever I could, and sometimes too highly, and for whom I have entertained no unkind feelings. But the cause of truth and justice demands it of me. Falsehood should not forever prevail over truth, and that I may contribute, as is my duty . . . to the final triumph of right, I have recorded these things in sorrow, and not in anger."

Houston, of course, was in utter ignorance of Jones's real feelings. As a matter of fact, he had such confidence in the New Englander's loyalty, and a certain fondness for him on account of it, that he put himself behind Jones's candidacy for the presidency

Sam Houston

and was almost entirely responsible for his election. On September 24, 1844, therefore, when Houston wrote the note directing that Ashbel Smith be instructed to proceed with the Diplomatic Act, Jones was not only secretary of state but also president-elect. Now at last he had the chance to assert himself, especially since Houston had left the capital, and instead of transmitting the instructions, he ordered Smith to return to Texas. Years after the event, Jones insisted that he had disobeyed Houston because he knew that it would mean war, but Ashbel Smith has left this entirely different account:

Why did Anson Jones, secretary of state, disobey the orders of President Sam Houston? Why did he not send instructions to Ashbel Smith to pass the diplomatic act? It is scarcely possible for me to be in error in asserting that Mr. Jones declined to send me the instructions because he intended to make the diplomatic act, bringing honorable peace and independence . . . the prominent measure of his administration. It did not enter his thoughts to oppose, to attempt to thwart the wishes of the people of Texas. Annexation, just spurned again, appeared indefinitely postponed if not forever hopeless. He said to Ashbel Smith on his return from Europe and entering on his new duties as secretary of state: "It was hardly fair to deprive you of the honor of negotiating a treaty in London, but the negotiation shall take place here, and you, as secretary

Sam Houston

of state, shall conduct it for Texas." He remarked that as president-elect, he had the right to decline obeying the orders of President Houston. . . .

Would war have followed the passing of the diplomatic act? Would an attempt have been made by the United States to enforce what is called the Monroe doctrine by an appeal to arms? *No.* The United States had spurned the admission of Texas—they had been invited to take part in the proposed negotiations—they would have had to confront Great Britain and France with Spain and Mexico. Individuals talk flippantly of war—men at the head of affairs are conscious of responsibility. And on the other hand turning our thoughts for a moment to later, to a very recent time, and referring to the mightiest matter which has befallen this people since their birth as a nation in 1776, would Texas have been drawn into the war of secession? Would there rather have been an exodus from other states to Texas, an independent republic, like the people of God of old, to a promised land?

Continuing this line of speculation, Mr. Smith considered the probable results had Jones followed Houston's instructions:

The British minister was ready—the Count de Sainte-Aulaire, French Ambassador at London, was ready—with instructions and full powers to pass the act. There were no new points

Sam Houston

to be discussed and settled. The negotiation might have been completed at a single sitting. The act could have been forwarded to Texas as soon as the clerks could have prepared copies. The senate, probably both houses of the Texas congress, would have been immediately convened. I was not in Texas at the time, but persons of different parties, thoroughly conversant with public sentiment, have led me to believe that an honorable treaty bringing peace to this land would have been accepted with shouts of joy. Such was the opinion of Sam Houston. Such was the opinion of Anson Jones. I had it from themselves. The diplomatic act negotiated in conformity with the instructions of President Houston, as just stated, would have been submitted to the people of Texas at a moment when annexation, twice spurned by the United States, seemed hopeless. The excitement on the subject of British meddling with American slavery had not yet been fanned into a flame in the United States, had not yet reached Texas—the minds of politicians in Texas had not yet been tempted and dazzled into extreme eagerness by promises of office under federal appointment—the masses of the people of Texas had not yet been cajoled into a desire for annexation by unstinted promises of the great and goodly things which the administration at Washington was burning to do for Texas, so soon as it should become a member of the American union. The country had but one wish then—that wish was for peace.

Sam Houston

In such manner did the inflamed vanity of a pompous little New England druggist work fundamental changes in the history of the world. Even had Great Britain and France dared to proceed with the Diplomatic Act in the face of Jones's refusal to join, other causes soon conspired to chill enthusiasm. Drugs and debauchery had addled Santa Anna's mind until no vestige of intelligence remained, and not content with pillaging the treasury, he began to blackmail business firms and private citizens. As always, rebellion broke out, and as a last desperate gesture, the dictator proclaimed war against Texas, shouting that he would make "every mountain defile a Thermopylæ."

England protested with might and main, pointing out that such an insane course would "paralyze the exertions by which Great Britain and France were prepared to uphold the independence of Texas against the encroachments of the United States, even at a risk of collision with that power," but Santa Anna not only persisted in his clamor, but actually informed the Mexican Congress that England had promised him aid in a war for the recovery of Texas.

In France, news of the Diplomatic Act caused the French chamber to burst into a blaze of pro-American feeling, and Guizot, attacked as England's catspaw, was compelled to withdraw from the secret concert with Great Britain. Faced by this recantation, and blocked by Santa Anna's insane folly, Peel and Aber-

Sam Houston

deed recognized the hopelessness of further effort, and washed their hands of the affair.

Thus, by the intervention of nothing larger than a small man's wounded self-esteem, ended a mighty undertaking that would have robbed the United States of an empire, continuing Texas as an independent republic, buttressed by Great Britain and France, and fixing the Rocky Mountains as the western boundary of the Union.

[XXIII]

ANNEXATION

THE presidential campaign in the United States, despite the confident expectations of Clay, Webster and the Whigs, soon developed a strong sentiment in favor of the annexation of Texas. A war with England over Oregon seemed imminent, and this made the acquisition an important feature of the national defense. Moreover, public discussion quickly showed the dishonesty of many of the arguments against annexation, Daniel Webster, in particular, having an awkward time of it. His 1842 correspondence with Bocanegra was cited to prove the absolute independence of Texas, and her unquestionable right to do with herself as she pleased, and poor Webster's attacks became fewer and far less impassioned.

With respect to the claim that Texas could not be taken into the Union without Mexico's consent, it was recalled that neither Adams nor Clay had troubled about asking Spain's consent when they tried to buy Texas from Mexico in 1825. As for "obligations" imposed by the treaty with Mexico, it was pointed out that the treaty with Spain in 1819 pledged the United

Sam Houston

States to respect Mexico as a Spanish possession for all time, yet within five months from the declaration of a Mexican republic, the infant government had been recognized by President Monroe.

Clay, feeling the swing in public sentiment, came out in July with the startling declaration that he would favor annexation if elected, but his many changes had caused him to lose all hold on public confidence. Tyler, nominated as an independent candidate, withdrew in favor of Polk; and with Oregon and Texas as battle-cries, the Democrats swept forward to victory. At the election, Polk won overwhelmingly, receiving 170 electoral votes to 105 for Clay, the popular idol. It had long been Tyler's contention that Texas could be admitted to the Union by a joint act of Congress, as well as by treaty, and now that the people had approved annexation, he put the proposition before the House in an able, well-tempered message.

None of these things had power to soften Houston's bitterness. While it was true that the negotiations with England and France had collapsed because of Jones's disobedience and the follies of the incredible Santa Anna, Houston was more than ever convinced that Texas could stand alone. Thanks to his iron economies and wise administration, Lamar's ruin had been repaired, revenues were being collected and disbursed in gold and silver, the public debt had been notably lessened, and for the first time there was

Sam Houston

money in the treasury. Population was increasing steadily, Santa Anna had just been sent into exile, and with the fear of Mexican invasion reduced to a minimum, Houston thrilled anew to his dream of an independent empire.

On December 9, therefore, in the farewell address that closed his second term, he spoke these words with respect to annexation: "The United States have spurned Texas twice already. Let her therefore firmly maintain her position as it is, and work out her own political salvation. Let her legislation proceed upon the principle that we are to be and to remain an independent people. If Texas goes begging again for admission to the United States, she will only degrade herself. . . . If we remain an independent nation our territory will become extensive—unlimited."

Ashbel Smith also relates an incident that throws additional light on Houston's attitude. "He was leaving Washington on the Brazos one morning in February, 1845," records Smith. "He came into my room, booted, spurred, whip in hand. Said he, 'Saxe Weimar [the name of his saddle-horse] is at the door, saddled. I have come to leave Houston's last words with you. If the Congress of the United States shall not by the 4th of March pass some measure of annexation that Texas can with honor accede to, Houston will take the stump against annexation for all time to come.' When he wished to be emphatic he spoke of

Sam Houston

himself by name, Houston, in the third person. Without another word, embracing after his fashion, he mounted his horse and left."

Jones and Smith were no less opposed to annexation, unless offered graciously and on generous terms, although both believed that the aid of foreign powers would be necessary to the maintenance of Texas independence. Jones realized by now that he had lost a great opportunity by not obeying Houston's instructions, but in the event that annexation failed again, he felt assured of his ability to win Great Britain and France to some new agreement. Hunt had been recalled from Washington some months before, and Van Zandt instructed that all matters connected with annexation would henceforth be handled from Texas, and it was in silence and inaction, therefore, that Jones and Smith awaited the vote on Tyler's proposal to the House.

In the United States there was no lessening of Texas enthusiasm, but rather an intensification. Adams and the abolitionists still threatened secession, but the country, as a whole, was in the grip of a strong anti-British feeling. The people had learned of the Diplomatic Act, and anger was not abated by the violence of the English press. The London Times declared that Europe should resist the seizure of Texas by the United States as "an act of rapine, calculated to deprive her of a useful ally, to perpetuate slavery, and to create a rival maritime power in the Gulf of

Sam Houston

Mexico," and the Morning Post screamed that "the republican monster must be checked."

It was under such circumstances that the House met to cast its vote, and in January annexation carried overwhelmingly, fifty-three Northern men voting in the affirmative. The House resolution, slightly amended, was adopted by the Senate one month later, the Benton group coming over, as did all the Van Buren following. The vote was 27 to 25, and of the affirmatives, thirteen were from free states, and fourteen from slave states; of the negatives, fifteen were from free states and ten from slave states. The House concurred by a vote of 123 to 76, and on March 1 the joint resolution was placed before President Tyler for his signature.

José Joaquín Herrera, who had succeeded the exiled Santa Anna in December, was an honest man and an intelligent one. He knew, as every other Mexican of sense also knew, that talk of reconquering Texas was absurd, and that Mexico's hope lay in a resumption of the Anglo-French negotiations that Santa Anna had broken off. Better an independent, friendly Texas than an annexed Texas, strengthening the "Colossus of the North." As a consequence, he opened conversations immediately, and in January, 1845, Captain Elliott and Count Saligny, the representatives of Great Britain and France, received detailed instructions as to a new treaty. Mexico was to recognize the independence of Texas in return for a pledge that

Sam Houston

Texas would not permit herself to be annexed, or become subject to any other country whatsoever.

It was Herrera's demand that Texas should first sign a preliminary treaty, and on March 29, 1845, Ashbel Smith, as secretary of state, affixed the signature that bound his country to the terms of the agreement. The terms of annexation offered by the United States were far less generous than had been promised, being niggardly indeed in many respects, and Jones and Smith were convinced that the people would rejoice at a safe chance to reject it. Houston confirmed this belief, and strongly urged acceptance of the treaty. The Congress of the United States had proved itself a parcel of pettifogging, penny-pinching rascals, and it were well to be quit of them.

Captain Elliott, with the signed treaty, slipped away to Mexico at once, reaching the capital on April 14. Cuevas, the Minister of Foreign Relations, signed the treaty without delay, and Herrera approved it, but, unfortunately, they faced the difficulty of having to secure the consent of Congress. It was not until May 19 that the haggling politicians authorized Herrera's action, a delay that turned out to be ruinous, for when Elliott arrived in Texas on May 30, he found conditions vastly changed.

President Polk, learning of the new negotiations with Mexico, had acted quickly and cleverly. A. J. Donelson, Andrew Jackson's nephew, was rushed to Texas, together with various other popular Southern-

Sam Houston

ers, and annexation sentiment was skilfully fanned by fervent appeals to blood ties. Were Anglo-Saxons, sons of men who had fought at Bunker Hill and Valley Forge, to reject union with the motherland, and make alliance with foreign powers whose one purpose was injury to the United States? Was Texas, with her memories of the Alamo and Goliad, to forget the past and form a covenant with bloody Mexico?

The various rejections of the treaty were ascribed to the North's jealousy of the South, and ratification of annexation was held up to the Texans as an effective mode of reprisal for the humiliation inflicted upon them by the New England Whigs. Ashbel Smith, in his "Reminiscences," also deals forcefully with other activities and considerations that aided in the reversal of Texas sentiment:

Major Donelson, the regularly accredited minister, and other official agents sent to Texas by the administration of President Polk were most lavish of their averments of what the federal government would do for Texas so soon as the consummation of annexation would enable them to execute their promises. Among the most distinguished of these official agents were ex-Governor Yell of Arkansas, General Wickliff of Kentucky, and Commodore Stockton of the United States navy. The promises were, among others, to clear out our rivers for navigation, to deepen the entrances of our harbors, to build lighthouses on our coast for commerce, to erect

Sam Houston

military works, fortifications for the defense of the coast, to execute important works of internal improvement, and to do various and sundry other good things for Texas which were beyond our means, or which they could do for us better than we of ourselves could.

Under the fostering protection of the United States it was gloriously prophesied, with spread-eagle magniloquence, that capital would flow into Texas in ocean streams to develop and utilize our incalculable natural resources. Employment, wealth, prosperity would reign in this land. Here in the west lay the inexhaustible Orient. It would afford the administration at Washington its chiefest pleasure to do all goodly things for us. I can vouch for these facts. They are known to me of personal knowledge. Major Donelson and Governor Yell expatiated on these promises in my hearing. . . .

There was in Texas a party composed of gentlemen of great ability, of former public services, of high ambition, of ardent imaginations, of lofty patriotism, opposed to the administrations of Sam Houston and of Anson Jones, with the unreasoning energy so often characteristic of party contests. They were out of office which they coveted, and the success of the Houstonian policy, crowned with peace, seemed to insure indefinite continuance in power of the Houston party and indefinite exclusion of the leaders of the opposition. The promises of high office, made to them by annexation emissaries, told on these gentle-

Sam Houston

men. . . . In the opposition also were adventurous spirits whose day-dreams were of warlike expeditions, men as bold, as ardent, as Cortez or Pizarro, whose fancies reveled in desperate battles and in imaginary plunder of the halls of the Montezumas. The pacific policy of Houston, long and solid peace with Mexico, sounded a farewell, the occupation gone, for these restless spirits. The contingencies of annexation offered chances of war. War came, but alas for their dreams, it was waged under other auspices, other leaders, other counsels, in none of which had they part.

The attack, for the most part, was launched against Houston, who was charged with having taken "British gold," and openly accused of "treason, bribery and corruption." Poor Anson Jones! After all his struggles he was still regarded as "Houston's puppet." As for "Old San Jacinto," for the first time in his life he found himself in doubt as to his course. He had been angered deeply by the terms of annexation, and felt in his heart that he could secure the adoption of the Herrera proposal by throwing himself into the fight with all his force. .

Donelson's propaganda was succeeding only because unopposed, Anson Jones's weak cries counting for nothing. For Houston to take the stump, reciting the humiliations heaped upon Texas by the United States, pointing out the poor terms offered, and explaining

Sam Houston

his dream of a great independent republic stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, would be to defeat annexation once and for all. He knew it, and wanted to do it, but vital personal considerations intervened.

Andrew Jackson Donelson had come to Texas with a letter and a fervent appeal from "Old Hickory," even then ill unto death. These messages from one whom he loved as a father worked powerfully on Houston's emotions. At bottom, too, he was intensely American, proud of his native land, proud of his blood, and these considerations joined eventually to change his first stubborn resolve. He would not come out openly in favor of annexation, but he would not attack it, and this, in effect, was support.

When Captain Elliott reached Texas, bearing the signed treaty, he discovered that President Jones, under threat of ejection from office, had been compelled to call a convention and an extra session of Congress for consideration of the annexation proposals. He handed the treaty to Jones at once, and the president published it in a proclamation, but Elliott made the blunder of intimating that rejection might possibly mean war. This threat merely aroused a new anger against Great Britain, and prevented any calm consideration of the offer itself.

The convention of the people, meeting in Austin on July 4, ratified annexation with a shout, Congress indorsed with only one dissenting vote, and a constitution framed by the convention, received equally

Sam Houston

unanimous approval in October. President Polk approved the document on December 29, and necessary legislation extended the laws of the United States over what had been the republic of Texas. Whereupon, Mexico, branding the act as a rape of her territory, declared war.

XXIV

SAM HOUSTON AS SENATOR

IT WAS as a Senator of the United States that Sam Houston entered Washington in March of 1846. Fourteen years before he had left the capital under a load of opprobrium, branded by public opinion as a drunken ruffian, and facing no larger future than that afforded by the squalid confines of a Cherokee village. Now he returned in glory—the hero of San Jacinto, the successful administrator, the man who had given an empire to his native land—his unhappy past wiped out by a flood of popular admiration for one who had dared greatly and achieved nobly.

His appearance met every dramatic demand, for the tall, majestic figure was invariably draped in an Indian blanket, the startling effect enhanced by a vest of tiger skin and a broad-brimmed white hat that flapped like a sail in the breeze. In the Senate, he was no less a conspicuous figure, for while his speeches had none of the beauty and finish that marked the oratory of Webster, Clay, Calhoun and Benton, the picturesque phrases brought a breath from forest and prairie, and had the added value of courage and honesty. For the

Sam Houston

most part, he held to an Indian stoicism, filling his waste-paper basket with pine whittlings, but when the debate engaged his interest, his words had the unerring drive of a Texas bullet.

Oliver Dyer, writing of him at the time, records that the Texan was one of the few famous men whose appearance did not disappoint,—“large of frame, of stately carriage and dignified demeanor . . . lionlike countenance capable of expressing the fiercest passions . . . a magnificent barbarian,” and comments that it was “easy to believe in his heroism, and to imagine him dealing destruction to his foes.”

Contrary to expectation, Houston supported the President vigorously in the effort to avoid hostilities with Mexico, for, strangely enough, this man of violent life had a hatred of war, deeming it wasteful, demoralizing and depraving. Although Mexico had broken off relations when Texas was annexed, the pacific Polk begged parleys, and dispatched John Slidell with instructions to pay as much as \$5,000,000 for a satisfactory adjustment of the Texas boundary, and an additional \$25,000,000 for California in event that Mexico was willing to part with the territory.

President Herrera was more than eager to bargain, but inasmuch as he was an honest man and a constitutionalist, the Old Order leaped at the chance to get rid of him. At once he was accused of “selling Mexico’s honor” and “truckling to the Colossus of the North,” and in a last desperate effort to retain power,

Sam Houston

poor Herrera refused to receive Slidell and ordered General Paredes to march to the Rio Grande. Paredes, however, a veteran servant of the Old Order, quickly turned back with his troops and kicked Herrera out of office on the ground that the president sought "to avoid a necessary and glorious war."

Before the new dictator was well settled in his chair, Slidell was begging an audience, only to be ordered out of the country. Press, politicians, soldiers and people all gave themselves over to an orgy of national vanity, and orators and editors freely prophesied that "the Mexican flag would soon be waving over the ancient palace of George Washington." Not only were they confident that the "ignorant Indian-fighters" could be whipped with ease, but there were the assurances of the Whigs that the people of the United States would not take arms in support of "Polk's war." Moreover, had not England and France pledged aid?

Drunken, vainglorious Paredes, after rejecting Slidell as publicly and offensively as possible, lost no time in rushing General Arista and the army to the Rio Grande. Arista, under specific instructions to open hostilities without delay, sent a detachment of cavalry across the river, and ambushed an American scouting party. When President Polk, therefore, went before Congress on May 11 and declared that "war exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself," he spoke truly.

Sam Houston

With hostilities under way, Houston gave himself wholeheartedly to the success of American arms, for while a pacifist, he was anything but an apostle of non-resistance. As a member of the committee on military affairs, he took an active and intelligent interest in the campaigns, and was a frequent and bitter critic of General Zachary Taylor, whose blunders were only saved from disaster by the superior incompetency of Santa Anna. The peace treaty was not at all to Houston's liking, for not only did he urge the retention of the North American states, but out of a firm belief that the people of Mexico were the prey of the corrupt ruling classes, he wanted the United States to establish a protectorate over the whole country.

It was in connection with the Oregon and California debates, however, that Houston rose to his full stature. The calumnies of Adams and the abolitionists had prepared the Senate for an irreconcilable pro-slavery champion and fire-eating secessionist, and his bold, unflinching stand came equally as a surprise to the North and a shock to the South. The bill for the establishment of a territorial government for Oregon prohibited slavery, and when Calhoun led the Southern attack upon the provision, Houston took the lists against him with a passion and vigor that stamped him as a force to be reckoned with. The proposed admission of California as a free state precipitated another battle, and again the Texan senator matched himself

Sam Houston

against the brilliant South Carolinian, winning a second victory.

There was a drama in the clash, for it was Calhoun who had rebuked the young hero of Horseshoe Bend for his Indian dress; Calhoun who had tricked the Texan representatives into signing a treaty without guarantees, and Calhoun who had led the fight against Andrew Jackson, Houston's adoration. More than this, Calhoun represented the aristocracy of the South—the Cavalier blood—while Houston was a man of the people, giving his devotion to the welfare of those who bore the burdens of life.

Houston's stand against the Southern position was not due in any degree to sympathy with the abolitionists or their cause, for he regarded them as being as much a menace to the peace of the country as Calhoun and his fanatics. Both, in his opinion, were willing to destroy the Union in their partizan rage, and this, in his eyes, was the unforgivable sin, the ultimate blasphemy. From earliest manhood he had been reared in the Jacksonian tradition, and his heart still echoed the mighty battle-cry: "The Federal Union! It must and shall be preserved!"

In common with many other leaders of Southern thought, he looked upon slavery as an evil institution, a cancer that ate at strength and energy, but he hated it most for its disruptive effects, because he saw it as the wedge of separation between the sections, and felt that the bitter discussions, unless calmed, would end

Sam Houston

in bloody, disastrous war. He feared for the Union, but he also feared for the South, convinced that civil strife would mean its ruin. Thomas H. Benton was the only other Southern senator with equal vision and courage, but the two were voices crying in the wilderness.

The Texan, even more than the Missourian, was attacked as a traitor to his people, but he rode the storm as he had ridden so many others, serene and unafraid. Predictions were freely made that Texas would rise against him for his stand, but when the time came, he was reelected without opposition. The Senate that he entered for a second term was without Clay and Webster, both of whom had passed away, and without the tremendous Benton, defeated by his angry constituents, and Houston was now the one Southerner in opposition to the secessionist campaign of Calhoun.

The inevitable battle was not long delayed. Stephen Douglas, confident that the Northern Democrats were firm in his support, felt that the presidency would be his if he could but find a way to win the Southern members of the party. As a consequence, he introduced his Kansas-Nebraska Bill, giving the new territories the right to admit slavery, a provision that meant the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which for fifty years had kept peace.

It was at the famous night session of March 3 that Houston made his chief attack upon the bill, and not even Webster or Clay were ever given more intense

Sam Houston

attention than the great Texan as he fought in defense of justice, peace and accord. No finer speech was made during the course of the notable debate. His very first words gave the keynote. "I cannot believe," he said solemnly, "that the agitation created by this measure will be confined to the Senate chamber. I cannot believe from what we have witnessed here tonight that this will be the exclusive arena for the exercise of human passion and the expression of public opinion. If the Republic be not shaken, I will thank Heaven for its kindness in maintaining its stability." Branding the bill as a blow at the very foundations of the Union, he argued against it in a speech of singular beauty and power, and ended with the warning: "Sir, if this repeal takes place, I will have seen the commencement of the agitation, but the youngest child now born will not live to witness its termination." He spoke in vain, for the bill passed with Houston and Bell, of Tennessee, the only Southern senators voting against it.

Perhaps the most eloquent portion of Houston's speech was with reference to that portion of the bill that provided for the dispossession of the Indians living in the territories, for the injustices suffered by the wretched aborigines always had power to wring his heart. Much of his contempt for the abolitionists—his fixed belief that the movement had the ruin of the South as its principal object—was due to the fact that

Sam Houston

not one ever took time from the woes of the black man to lift his voice in behalf of the miserable red man, so continuously cheated, plundered, oppressed and debauched. The bright spots of his Senate terms were furnished by the visits of Indian delegations, and one biographer has given us this moving, even if perfunctory, account of the meeting between Houston and some forty-odd chiefs who came to Washington from Texas:

One and all ran to him and clasped him in their brawny arms, and hugged him like bears to their naked breasts, and called him father. Beneath the copper skin and thick paint the blood rushed, and their faces changed, and the lip of many a warrior trembled, although the Indian may not weep. These wild men knew him, and revered him as one who was too directly descended from the Great Spirit to be approached with familiarity, and yet they loved him so well they could not help it. These were the men "he had been," in the fine language of Acqui-quask, whose words we quote, "too subtle for, on the war-path—too powerful in battle, too magnanimous in victory, too wise in council, and too true in faith." They had flung away their arms in Texas, and with the Comanche chief who headed their file, had come to Washington to see their father. We said these iron warriors shed no tears, when they met their old friend—but white men who stood by will tell us that they did. We have witnessed few scenes

Sam Houston

in which mingled more of what is called the moral sublime. In the gigantic form of Houston, on whose ample brow the beneficent love of a father was struggling with the sternness of the patriarch warrior, we saw civilization awing the savage at his feet. We needed no interpreter to tell us that this impressive supremacy was gained in the forest.

It is strange indeed to find Sam Houston, unlettered except for his own reading, so entirely a product of the frontier, visioning the future far more clearly than any of the trained statesmen of North or South. The following excerpt, taken from the remembrances of Dr. Rufus Burleson, his pastor, shows that the Man of San Jacinto foresaw the results of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill as though the bloody battle-fields of the Civil War were before his eye, and his prediction of disasters have all the majestic authority of a major prophet:

I never shall forget his prediction and portrayal of the horrors of disunion and secession, as we stood alone in the beautiful live-oak grove in front of the Baptist church at Independence. He said: "John Bell and I were the only Southern men who voted against the repeal of the Missouri compromise, and we have been bitterly denounced as pandering to Northern fanaticism to secure the presidency. I see the editors and politicians of Texas are denouncing me, and some old and dear friends have turned away from me rudely, saying I have become a traitor to the South. But while

Sam Houston

that is the most unpopular vote I ever gave, it was the wisest and the most patriotic.

"Stephen A. Douglas introduced the repeal of the Missouri compromise to catch the vote of the South. He is now preparing another bill, called 'squatter sovereignty,' to catch the North, and he hopes that the two will place him in the presidential chair. But, alas, it opens the agitation of the slavery question, which has been crushed by the compromise measures of 1850. W. H. Seward and the Abolitionists are rejoicing, and are quoting with joy the foolish declaration of Rhett, who said: 'The slave power is aggressive, and I expect to call the roll of my slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill, in Boston.' The result of all this will be, in 1856 the Free Soil party will run a candidate for president, and the whole vote will be astounding. In 1860, the Free Soil party, uniting with the Abolitionists will elect the president of the United States.

"Then will come the tocsin of war and clamor for secession. Led on by Calhoun, the Rhetts, the Yanceys and Wigfalls, the South will secede. Each section, in profound blindness and ignorance of the other, will rush madly into war, each anticipating an easy victory. Alas! alas! What fields of blood, what scenes of horror, what mighty cities in smoke and ruins, brother murdering brother, rush on over my vision. I see my beloved South go down in the unequal contest, in a sea of blood and smoking ruin. I see slavery abolished; military despotism established over the South. I see the faithful servants, instead of be-

Sam Houston

ing Christianized and sent home to Christianize their own Africa, freed from all guide and control, turned loose to go to ruin and ultimate extermination, as the poor Indian has."

More and more, as the gulf widened between the sections, Houston's position became difficult and lonely, for while he refused friendship and association with the Northerners, his anti-secession attitude alienated the Southerners. He endured attacks and ostracism bravely enough and, what was strange for him, without any of the savage reprisals that marked his stormy years. Many changes had taken place in him, for not only had the years worked their discipline on his wild, ungovernable spirit, but the gentle influence of his beloved wife had proved no less powerful.

He drank no more, for one thing, and in support of a resolution inviting Father Matthew to a seat on the Senate floor, he openly and proudly declared his reformation. Religion had also been embraced by him. While he was never of an atheistical turn of mind, for from youth he had imbibed the Indian's reverence for a Great Spirit, denominationalism made small appeal to his broad tolerance, but when he joined the Baptist Church in 1854, no man strove more passionately to live in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

In this connection, Dr. Burleson relates a characteristic incident. The fiery divine and the Rev. Horace Clark, a fellow educator, became involved in a bitter dispute that divided the Baptist college into two fac-

Sam Houston

tions, and at a certain hearing, Dr. Burleson so far lost his temper as to challenge the honesty of the moderator. That night he met Houston at the home of a friend, and on holding out his hand was surprised and hurt to have it thrust aside.

"During all my public life," sternly remarked the doctor's most recent convert, "I have never seen such impropriety in the proceedings of any body as you were guilty of this morning in the Baptist church when you shook your finger in Dr. Ross's face, charged him with dishonorable conduct, and told him that nothing but his gray hair protected him from personal violence. You baptized me in Rocky Creek, and in your company I have spent many happy hours. For years I have been your devoted friend. But, Brother Burleson, after witnessing your conduct this morning, I cannot, will not, take your hand until convinced that you have sincerely repented." What is more, he *didn't*!

In the dark months that followed his opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, Houston had need of all the strength that religious faith could give. The Southern press damned him as a traitor, the Texas legislature condemned him for his course, twenty county conventions passed resolutions of condemnation, and the Democratic state convention rebuked him.

In the opening days of the presidential campaign of 1856, there was a considerable movement among the Northern Democrats in favor of Houston, but he made no effort to further his candidacy. It was a time when

Sam Houston

the Know-Nothing party enjoyed its brief burst of power, and its leaders were also attracted to the Texan by his firm stand against unrestricted immigration. When accused in the Senate of catering to Know-Nothing sentiment, however, Houston did not hesitate to attack religious prejudice, declaring for the widest measure of religious freedom, and made this statement of his views on immigration:

I admit that we are all descended from foreigners, because, originally, there were no natives here who were white men. Many of those foreigners who originally came here, were baptized in the blood of the Revolution; but they were not such men as are now coming to our shores, and should not be named in connection with those who are spewed loathingly from the prisons of England, and from the pauper houses of Europe. Such men are not to be compared to our ancestry, or to the immigration which, until recently, has come to our shores from foreign countries. If the object of those to whom the Senator from Iowa has referred is to prevent men of infamous character and paupers from coming here, I agree with them. I would say, establish a law, requiring every person from abroad, before being received here, to bring an endorsement from one of our consuls abroad, and produce evidence of good character from the place whence he emigrates, so that when he comes here, we may receive him into full communion with all the rights guaranteed to him by the laws which may exist at the time of his

Sam Houston

emigration. But, sir, to say that a felon, who left his prison the day he sailed for this country, or, perhaps, was brought in chains to the vessel which bore him here, is, in five years, to stand an equal with the proudest man who walks on our soil, the man who has shed his blood to consecrate liberty and his country, is not the kind of arrangement that I go for.

In 1856, James Buchanan, "a Northern man with Southern principles," as was Van Buren, entered the presidential office, and with this increase of power, Calhoun drove more ruthlessly than ever at his stubborn purpose. Houston still stood in lonely opposition, fighting for what he believed to be the true interests of the South, but every day brought fresh indication that Texas was no longer at his back. It was not the slavery question that had worked the change, but sectional feeling, for Texas was almost solidly Southern in population, and yielded increasingly to the pull of blood ties. Houston was warned by friends that his course would mean defeat, but he refused to change it in any particular, nor did he lift a hand to combat the growing anger.

Many signs pointed to the fact that public life had become distasteful to him. His position in the Senate was painful without being effective, and he was now sixty-five years of age. The peace and quiet of home life were things that his tempestuous career had never known, and the loneliness of his Senate service inten-

Sam Houston

sified his longing for uninterrupted days with his wife and family. As if to add to his depression, there came news of the suicide of General Rusk, his fellow senator, his comrade at San Jacinto, his tower of strength in the dark days of governorship, and the friend of his bosom. General James Hamilton, chosen to succeed him, met death in a collision at sea while on his way to Washington, resigning his place in the boat that others might be saved.

Depressed as he had never been before, unutterably weary, and suddenly sick of it all, Houston refused to make any effort for reelection, watching silently while the Texans named Lewis T. Wigfall, a violent disciple of Calhoun. Runnels, the governor, was a fire-eating secessionist of similar type, but when sober-minded citizens nominated Houston to run against him on an independent ticket, he did not even take the stump, and was beaten for the first and only time in a Texas election. He counted the days until retirement, his true ambition receiving expression when Senator Iverson, of Georgia, in the course of a debate in 1859, charged him with "catering" for the presidency. Scornfully denying it, Houston said:

If every political party of this Union were to tender me this day the nomination for the presidency I would respectfully decline it. I have higher, nobler, tenderer duties to perform. I have to create a resting-place for those who are dear to me as the people of this Union, and who

Sam Houston

form part of them. These are the duties I have to perform. If there is aught of public service that remains to me unfinished I am not apprized of it. My life has been meted out to sixty-five years; and forty-five years of that life devoted to my country's service, almost continuously, should entitle me to an honorable discharge. I claim that discharge from my country. I claim that, having performed every duty which devolved upon me with fidelity, I ought to be permitted to retire from this chamber in accordance with my heart-felt desires, with a constitution, thank God, not much impaired, and with clean hands and a clean conscience, to the retirement where duties are demanded of me as a father.

It was on February 26, 1859, that he delivered his farewell speech in the Senate, and its end was a solemn prayer for the perpetuity of the Union. Having done, he turned his face to the west where was the simple log cabin that promised rest and peace and happiness.

[XXV]

SAM HOUSTON VS. TEXAS

THERE are men born to tumult and storm, doomed by life never to know calm or haven. Such a man was Sam Houston. Tired and worn, weighed down by a dreary sense of futility, he reached Texas only to find a condition of affairs that gave retirement the color of cowardice and dishonor. Runnels, re-nominated for governor, was running on a platform that openly declared for secession in event that the North persisted in attacking "the vested rights and interests of the South," and a secret order, the Knights of the Golden Circle, cowed public opinion to a point where opposition did not dare to be expressed.

There was but one man in the whole of Texas who might possibly stem the secessionist tide, and the Unionist groups went to Sam Houston with the prayer that he would save the state from itself. It was a movement without money or power, possessing nothing upon which a hope of success could be reasonably based, yet when nominated for governor on an independent ticket, Houston accepted as though a great favor had been conferred. "*The Federal Union:*

Sam Houston

it must and shall be preserved." Andrew Jackson was dead and gone, but still that beloved voice called from the grave, and summoning his strength for one last tremendous effort, "Old San Jacinto" plunged into the battle.

There is something almost fearsome about the ease with which a lie can be embalmed in history. Just as the partizan buncombe of Adams, Clay and Webster distorted the record in connection with the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War, so have the venomous attacks of Sam Houston's enemies been permitted to gain the color of truth, and even in Texas today there is ready, if somewhat apologetic, admission of his "demagoguery."

This in the face of plain and established facts! During the rebellion, Houston held to his plan of campaign against the rage of a people and the mutinies of his army; it was his popularity and political future that he hazarded in behalf of Santa Anna; his public denunciation of Lamar and Johnston for the despoliation of the Cherokees was made while armed mobs threatened his life; his veto of the war resolutions of 1842 was still another defiance of popular passion that earned threats of assassination; his vote against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill brought down upon his head an avalanche of hatred, and cost him his seat in the Senate; and at the last, in the closing days of his life, when peace and quiet was the one desire of his sick heart, he accepted the Unionist nomination, challenged

Sam Houston

his party, and threw down the gage to an anger-blinded people.

At no point was Sam Houston's leadership of the kind that consisted in shrewd divination of public prejudice or popular wish. His decisions were invariably made in conference with his conscience, and there is no instance of his choosing the easy path, the line of least resistance. Had he chosen to declare for secession, even as late as 1859, the people would have thrown Runnels to one side, and again "Old Sam" would have been the idol of Texas. Instead of that, the "demagogue" turned away from the short cut to popularity, and invited hate and obloquy in a fight that his own supporters felt to be hopeless.

Not even at San Jacinto had Houston faced such odds, for now he fought alone. Every force of wealth and power was committed to the gospel of Calhoun; the entire press, without exception, clamored for secession, and the people themselves, intensely Southern, were increasingly possessed by a sullen and implacable anger against the North. Forlorn hopes, however, had always proved a clarion to his fighting spirit, and it was with all the fury and courage of youth that the old lion charged his foes.

On his own ground, among people that he knew, Sam Houston was without equal as a campaign orator, and it was a common saying that only two things could draw a Texas crowd—"Old San Jacinto" or a circus. Facing the hardest battle of his long career,

Sam Houston

Houston drew upon all that life and experience had taught him, and there was no art of appeal that he did not employ. Passion, invective, rough humor, cajolery, pathos, grim prophecy, sentimentalism—he touched every string as he went from town to town, pitting his personality against the lowering antagonism of the crowds.

Gone now was his weariness, and gone, too, were the Christian charities that he had been at such pains to cultivate. When he did not insult his opponents by lofty insolence, or shame them by contemptuous indifference, he flayed them alive with a tongue that had all of its old cutting edge. At one meeting, Senator Wigfall sat upon the platform, waiting for his turn to speak. When Houston had finished, he turned to Wigfall, his eye cold and intolerant, and casually remarked: "I hear that there's a little fellow following me around—Wiggletail or something like that—and he'll tell you a pack of lies." With that he turned and left the hall.

As the days went by, his speaking tour became a triumphal march, the people laughing with him, crying with him, and loving him as they were wont. When the votes were counted, it was found that he had beaten Runnels by 36,257 to 27,500. It was not that he had changed the thought of the Texans in any particular, or that they were less set upon secession, but merely that it was "Old Sam."

The feature of Houston's inaugural address was

Sam Houston

this solemn declaration: "Texas will maintain the situation and stand by the Union; it is all that can save us as a nation. Destroy it and anarchy awaits us." The feeling of encouragement, born of his election, was short-lived, for the presidential campaign of 1860 brought back all his forebodings. Memory of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill barred him from giving support to Stephen Douglas; the rabidly secessionist platform of Breckenridge seemed to him both stupid and criminal; he regarded Bell and the "National Constitutionists" as a joke; and his love for the South kept him from going to Lincoln.

With the Democratic party torn into three warring factions, and the young Republican party presenting a united and aggressive front, its victory seemed assured, and from all parts of the South came the threat that secession would certainly follow. On September 22, Houston struggled up from a sick-bed to address a mass-meeting at Austin, and while admitting that it looked as if Lincoln would be elected, declared that even this offered no excuse for disunion and the civil war that would ensue inevitably.

"The Union," he pleaded, "is worth more than Mr. Lincoln, and if the battle is to be fought for the constitution, let us fight it in the Union and for the sake of the Union." He denounced the secessionist agitators of the South as reckless and mischievous conspirators who owned no property and had no interest in slavery, and with one of his flashes of acid

Sam Houston

humor, declared that "some of them, who are making the most fuss, would not make good Negroes if they were blacked." There was no note of laughter, however, in his conclusion:

"When I look back and remember the names that are canonized as the tutelar saints of liberty, and the warnings they have given you against disunion, I cannot believe that you will be led astray. I cannot be long among you. My sands of life are fast running out. As the glass becomes exhausted, if I feel that I can leave my country prosperous and united, I shall die content. To leave men with whom I have mingled in troublous times, and whom I have learned to love as brothers; to leave the children of those whom I have seen pass away, after lives of devotion to the Union; to leave the people who have borne me up and sustained me; to leave my country, and not feel the liberty and happiness I have enjoyed would still be theirs, would be the worst pang of death."

With clear eyes he saw the disaster that secession would bring upon the South, and by every means in his power sought to avert the tragic step. One of his ideas was a convention of Southern states to discuss compromise measures, but not a governor paid him the courtesy of acknowledging the invitation, and the effort only accentuated hate and bitter resentment. Senator Wigfall insisted that Sam Houston should be tarred and feathered, and Iverson, of Georgia, publicly expressed the hope that "some Texan Brutus may

Sam Houston

arise and rid his country of this old hoary-headed traitor."

Now began a battle of political strategy between Houston and the advocates of secession. He refused to convene the legislature in special session, whereupon his enemies countered with a call for a citizens' convention to meet in Austin on January 28, 1861. Choosing the legislature as the lesser of two evils, Houston issued the call for an extra session to begin sitting on January 21, a week before the convention. This done, he hurried to various focal points in the state, rallying Unionist supporters. Dr. Burleson has left a vivid picture of "Old San Jacinto" in this black hour:

General Houston came to Independence, and when we were alone, seated under a live-oak tree, he said, "I am making my last effort to save Texas from the yawning gulf of ruin. I have been to San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Galveston and Huntsville, and now come to Independence, as the great educational center, hoping to rouse patriots to united action. My plan is for leading men to meet simultaneously in their different localities, and proclaim their unalterable devotion to the South, and opposition to the abolition fanaticism, but to declare that the wisest and safest plan is to make our fight in the Union and under the Stars and Stripes. Will you aid us in the struggle?"

I assured him I would with all my heart, but expressed great fear that all was lost. It was

Sam Houston

after midnight. He said, "Our only hope is in God. Let us kneel down and pray to the God of liberty." We waited eagerly for further word, but alas, in a few days, General Houston sent me a message: "All is lost. When the hour came, we could not rally a dozen men bold enough to come to the front and avow their convictions."

The legislature met, and one of Houston's first duties was to transmit an invitation from South Carolina, already seceded and now asking other Southern states to meet to form a Southern confederacy. He did so, but with the urgent recommendation that resolutions be adopted "dissenting from the assertion of the abstract right of secession, and refusing to send deputies for any present existing cause, and urging upon the people of all states, North and South, the necessity of cultivating brotherly feeling, observing justice, and attending to their own affairs."

It was a call to peace and good will that met with no larger response than the ancient Galilean cry. Moreover, the legislature recognized the citizens' convention as competent to act for the people of the state, stipulating only that the question of secession be submitted to popular vote. This done, it was Houston's contention that the convention was automatically dissolved, but in disregard of his protests, the body continued its sittings. A first act was to appoint a committee of safety, which in turn gave Colonel Ben

Sam Houston

McCullough, Houston's artillery chief at San Jacinto, full authority to raise and command state troops.

The Department of Texas, by reason of its nearness to Mexico, was richer in military supplies than any other, its arsenals packed with ordnance and munitions of every kind. General David E. Twiggs, a veteran soldier who had fought with Scott on the tremendous climb from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, was in chief command, and as he was known to be an ardent Southerner, Houston lost little time in writing him this letter:

The present pressure of important events necessarily induces prompt action on the part of all public functionaries. In this view of the matter, I send to you General J. M. Smith of this State on a confidential mission, to know what in the present crisis you consider your duty to do, as to maintaining in behalf of the Federal Government or passing over to the State the possession of the posts, arsenals, and public property within the State; and also, if a demand for the possession of the same is made by the Executive, you are authorized, or it would be comfortable to your sense of duty, to place in possession of the authorities of the State the posts, arms, munitions, and property of the Federal Government, on the order of the Executive, to an officer of the State, empowered to receive and receipt for the same.

The course is suggested by the fact that infor-

Sam Houston

mation has reached the Executive that an effort will be made by an unauthorized mob to take forcibly and appropriate the public stores and property to uses of their own, assuming to act on behalf of the State.

Any arrangements made with you by General Smith will be sanctioned and approved by me, and should you require any assistance in resisting the contemplated and unauthorized attack upon the public property, and to take the same in possession of the state authorities, you are authorized to call on the mayor and citizens of San Antonio for such assistance as you may deem necessary.

The answer that Twiggs returned was evasive to the last degree, and William M. Baker, who happened to be present at the time when it was received, gave this account of the effect upon Houston:

The instant the Governor had locked me with him in his inner office, he turned to me with rage in his face. "Sir," said he to me, in a manner and tone which I can never forget, "Twiggs is a traitor!" Then he sank down into his chair, the tears trickling down his heroic countenance, and sobbed like a child. He then clinched his fist and smote the table, with what seemed to be a suppressed curse, long and deep. After he had somewhat recovered he repeated to me the message that Captain Smith had brought him from Twiggs. It was in such cautious language as to

Sam Houston

the General's isolation and want of instructions from Washington that I suggested to Governor Houston that possibly he misunderstood General Twiggs. "No," the Governor exclaimed, again smiting the table with his huge fist, "there can be no mistake. Twiggs is a traitor. We are to have a fearful civil war."

Houston was right. On February 18, Twiggs surrendered to the committee on public safety all of the arms, munitions of war and public property of the United States in the Department of Texas. What was there for Houston to do now? What indeed but to make another appeal to the people? They had listened to him before, and surely, when he cried to them out of the anguish of his soul, they would heed him. There were threats of assassination if he dared to speak publicly, but the indomitable old warrior accepted the challenge and, as if to give point to his contempt, went at once to Galveston, the hotbed of secession. They would not let him have a hall, hoping to stifle that potent voice, but he checkmated the move by announcing his intention to speak from the hotel balcony.

A raging mob packed the street at the appointed hour, and friends begged the governor not to add to popular fury by an attempt to speak. He was certain to be howled down, if not stoned or shot. Pushing them aside, Houston walked out of the open window and took his place, august and unmoved as the great

Sam Houston

crowd roared its hate and anger. An eye-witness went from the scene to write down these vivid impressions:

There he stood, an old man of seventy years, on the balcony ten feet above the heads of the thousands assembled to hear him, where every eye could scan his magnificent form, six feet and three inches high, straight as an arrow, with deep-set and penetrating eyes, looking out from heavy and thundering eyebrows, a high open forehead, with something of the infinite intellectual shadowed there, crowned with the white locks, partly erect, seeming to give capillary conduction to the electric fluid used by his massive brain, and a voice of the deep basso tone, which shook and commanded the soul of the hearer; adding to all this a powerful manner, made up of deliberation, self-possession, and restrained majesty of action, leaving the hearer impressed with the feeling that more of his power was hidden than revealed. Thus appeared Sam Houston on this grand occasion, equal and superior to it, as he always was to every other. He paralyzed the arm of the mobocrat by his personal presence, and it was morally impossible for him to be mobbed in Texas, and if not there, then not anywhere.

In the inspired words of some ancient prophet, the man of Horseshoe Bend and San Jacinto painted the horrors of a fratricidal struggle and its inevitable disaster to the South. "Some of you," he cried, "laugh

Sam Houston

to scorn the idea of bloodshed as the result of secession, and jocularly propose to drink all the blood that will ever flow in consequence of it. But let me tell you what is coming on the heels of secession. The time will come when your fathers and husbands, your sons and brothers, will be herded together like sheep and cattle at the point of the bayonet; and your mothers and wives, sisters and daughters, will ask, 'Where are they?' and echo will answer, 'Where?' You may, after the sacrifice of countless millions of treasures and hundreds of thousands of precious lives, as a bare possibility, win Southern independence, if God be not against you; but I doubt it. I tell you that, while I believe with you in the doctrine of state rights, *the North is determined to preserve this Union.*"

Houston failed, but not ignobly. Of the 80,000 votes in Texas, almost half stayed away from the polls, and the result was 34,415 for secession, and 13,841 against. The convention quickly gave adherence to the Confederacy, and elected delegates to the Confederate Congress in Montgomery. On March 14 an ordinance was adopted that required all state officers to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy on pain of deposition, an action aimed directly at Sam Houston. They knew that he would refuse, and when he returned this refusal, an official order declared the office of governor to be vacant.

[XXVI]

LAST DAYS OF A TITAN

HOUSTON, like blind Samson, was not without the power to exact a terrible retribution had he so chosen. One day a horse-trader entered Austin, and behind locked doors confessed himself an agent of the Union. Colonel Waite, Twiggs's successor, was at Indianola with a body of troops, and Lincoln stood ready to send 50,000 soldiers into Texas. Houston was offered a major-general's commission and asked to take command.

He refused. The Union was as dear to him as his heart's blood—he had proved devotion during long, painful years in the Senate, proved it by facing the hate and anger of his own people, and now, at the last, by the forfeit of his office—but dearer even than the Union was his state. True, he had given much to Texas, yet Texas had given him much in return—his manhood, pride and self-respect—and every instinct of his being revolted at the thought of desertion in her hour of need.

He was without illusions as to the end of the war, foreseeing defeat and disaster, but when he had done

Sam Houston

everything in his power to avert the catastrophe—when Texas had made her decision, and was in the field with drawn sword—he bowed his head in acceptance. It was the decision of Lee and Jackson and countless other Southern leaders, for from the birth of the Republic, men had been reared in the tradition that loyalty to his *state* was the citizen's first duty.

Issuing a last address to the people, Houston said: "I love Texas too well to bring civil strife and bloodshed upon her. To avert this calamity I shall make no endeavor to maintain my authority as chief executive of the State, except by the peaceful exercise of my functions. When I can no longer do this, I shall calmly withdraw from the scene, leaving the government in the hands of those who usurped its authority, but still claiming that I am its chief executive. I protest in the name of the people of Texas against all the acts and doing of this Convention, and declare them null and void. I solemnly protest against the act of its members, who are bound by no oath themselves, in declaring my office vacant because I refuse to appear before it and take the oath prescribed."

The end was not long delayed. On the morning of March 21, he entered his office to find Edward Clark, the lieutenant-governor, in full possession. Almost contemptuously he was told to leave, as though he were a janitor whose services had ceased to give satisfaction, and without a word the savior of Texas accepted the situation. Hobbling about the room, for his

Sam Houston

wounds had reopened, as was their periodical habit, he collected his personal belongings in a small basket, and with this over his arm, walked out the door and through a lane of hostile eyes that rejoiced in what they deemed his humiliation. Grand manner undiminished, his air that of a victor, he left at once for the humble home near Huntsville where his loved ones waited, there to sit and watch the first great Texas crisis in which he did not play a leader's part.

The unselfishness of Sam Houston's life, the purity of his patriotism, stood attested by his home, a rude log house with only a small patch of land about it. His opportunities to win wealth had been innumerable, for many men, less well placed, were rich in money and land, but aside from his own temperamental distaste for "the gainful arts," devotion to the public service had absorbed every thought and energy.

Even the small annual earnings from his offices were never looked upon as his own, for he gave freely and unstintedly to those poorer than himself. Any old soldier, particularly, could command his purse, and there is a story that he took the coat from his own back to put about the shoulders of a tattered veteran of San Jacinto. In the days of the presidency, and during his terms as senator, the frugality of the Houston table was notorious, and there were times when his family would have gone hungry but for the kindly thought of successful hunters.

Old, broken and proscribed, it was actual poverty.

Sam Houston

that now faced him after thirty years of public service, and as if to spare him nothing, hate and persecution followed. A madness was upon the people, such as always attends the outbreak of war, and the old warrior's grim prophecies of defeat were not calculated to soften popular rage. From border to border he was damned as a traitor, and even when "Young Sam" enlisted in the Confederate Army, and received a father's blessing from "Old Sam," the anger of the Texans was not abated. Houston went to Galveston when the boy was in training, and when the colonel asked him to review the regiment, accepted without hesitation.

For the occasion he had put on his San Jacinto uniform, now in rags, and at his side was the battered sword, tied to the belt with the same old buckskin thong. Casting his cane aside, he hobbled to the front, and after giving the usual commands, indulged in a flash of the savage sarcasm for which he had been famous. A certain Judge Campbell and a man named Oldham had been foremost in clamoring for war, but after the habit of the type, were decidedly less conspicuous after the commencement of hostilities.

"Right about face!" ordered Houston in his loudest voice. "Do you see anything of Judge Campbell or Williamson S. Oldham here?"

"No," roared the regiment, quickly catching the point.

Sam Houston

"Eyes right! Do you see anything of Judge Campbell's son?"

"No! He has gone to school in Paris."

"Eyes left! Do you see anything of young Sam Houston here?"

"Yes," came the bellow of the regiment.

"Eyes front! Do you see anything of old Sam Houston here?"

"Yes," was the answer, and with one accord, soldiers and citizens joined in the tremendous cheer.

There were few such moments, however, for the politicians feared him and, out of their fear, kept the air filled with hints and charges that fell like acid on the public ear. Many charged communication with the enemy, and Governor Clark went so far as to spread the story that Houston was planning a revolution with purpose to declare Texas an independent republic. Bodily ills came to add to his affliction, for not only did mental stress take its toll, but the wounds of Horseshoe Bend and San Jacinto continued to trouble him.

A vast melancholy possessed him as North and South locked in still more deadly grapple. The initial successes of the Confederacy did not change his views as to the war's outcome, for he knew the Unionist superiority in man-power and money. Yet as the tide of battle began to turn against the South, his spirit flamed to the old high blaze, and when defeatist rumors

Sam Houston

began to spread, it was none other than Sam Houston who cried a message of courage.

"Whether the convention was right or wrong," he said, "is not now the question. Whether I was treated justly or unjustly is not now to be considered. I put all that under my feet, and there it shall stay. Let those who stood by me do the same, and let us all show, at a time when perils environ our beloved land, we know how to be patriots and Texans. . . . It is not time to turn back now; the people have put their hands to the plow; they must go forward; to recede would be worse than ignominy. Better meet war in its deadliest shape than cringe before an enemy whose wrath we have invoked.

"I make no pretension as to myself," he continued. "I have yielded up office, and sought retirement to preserve peace among our people. My services are perhaps not important enough to be desired. Others are perhaps more competent to lead the people through the revolution. I have been with them through the fiery ordeal once, and I know that with prudence and discipline their courage will surmount all obstacles. Should the tocsin of war, calling the people to resist the invader, reach the retirement to which I shall go, I will heed neither the denunciations of my enemies nor the clamor of my friends, but will join the ranks of my countrymen to defend Texas once again."

With every intensification of the struggle, Houston's partizanship increased. He had accepted hate

Sam Houston

and proscription for his devotion to the Union, but the South was the land of his heart, Texas was his state, and all those that he knew and loved were fighting under the Stars and Bars. Even so, the fierce old warrior still remained the noble foe.

The Southern general in command of the Department of Texas issued a proclamation of martial law, and under its provisions, citizens suspected of Unionist sympathies were deported or else subjected to stupid indignities. Houston at once denounced him as a tyrant, and made public demand upon Governor Clark that he put a stop to brutal and unnecessary oppression. More than that, he went in person to the prisons where Northern soldiers were confined, and by his denunciations and appeals forced better treatment. To the credit of the Texans, the stand was applauded and supported.

Exhausting emotions and anxieties brought on an illness in 1862 that carried him to the grave's edge, but as in the days of Horseshoe Bend, the giant frame repelled death's attack. In March, 1863, the people of Houston begged a speech, and disregarding the doctors, he struggled into his clothes and made the journey. It was to prove his last public appearance, and the feeling that it might be so gave a certain solemnity to his words. Near at hand was the battle-ground where he had won the independence of Texas twenty-seven years before, and as the memory washed away all hate and misunderstanding, it was with the old love

Sam Houston

in their eyes that people lifted their faces to the venerable speaker. Tears were running down his furrowed cheeks as he began, and it was in a broken voice that he thanked them for the proof that he still held a place in their regard.

"As you have gathered here," he continued, "to listen to the sentiments of my heart, knowing that the days draw nigh unto me when all thoughts of ambition and worldly pride give place to the earnestness of age, I know you will bear with me, while with calmness, and without the fervor and eloquence of youth, I express these sentiments which seem natural to my mind in view of the condition of the country. I have been buffeted by the waves as I have been borne along time's ocean, until, shattered and worn, I approach the narrow isthmus which divides it from the sea of eternity beyond.

"Ere I step forward to journey through the pilgrimage of death, I would say that all my thoughts and all my hopes are with my country. If one impulse arises before another, it is for the happiness of these people; the welfare and glory of Texas will be the uppermost thought while the spark of life lingers in this breast. Let us go forward, nerved to nobler deeds than we have yet given to history. Let us bid defiance to all the hosts that our enemies can bring against us. Can Lincoln expect to subjugate a people thus resolved? No! From every conflict they will arise the stronger and more resolute. Are we deprived of the luxuries

Sam Houston

which our enemies possess? We have learned how little necessary they are, and it is no privation to do without them."

It was an expression of confidence, however, that did not proceed from any deep inner conviction. From the first, Houston had felt the hopelessness of the Southern cause, yet as reverse followed reverse, he suffered under them as though they had not been expected. A great loneliness came upon him as he looked around and saw himself the last of the pioneer breed. The dashing Wharton, Archer, Rusk, Collingsworth, Grayson, Lamar, Jones—all had followed Travis and Bowie and Crockett, and there were crowded towns, noisy with chaffering, where once his horse had raced the open prairie.

His one hold upon life was the hope of Southern victory, and when they brought him the news of the fall of Vicksburg, he saw it as the finish and took to his bed, never to rise again. There was no illness, only a great weariness that robbed him of the will to live. About his bedside were gathered all the members of the family with the exception of "Young Sam," wounded and a prisoner in the North.

One of his daughters, Mrs. Maggie Houston Williams, has given this account of the end: "He died on July 26, 1863, three weeks after the fall of Vicksburg. He had received his death-blow when Texas seceded, and now a death-blow had fallen on the Confederacy with which our lot was cast. For more than three

Sam Houston

weeks he was confined to his bed. The day previous to his death he fell into a comatose state from which we could not arouse him: but during the next forenoon, we heard his voice in a tone of entreaty, and listening to the feeble sound, we caught the words 'Texas! Texas!' He had loved and labored for his adopted state, and her memory had gone with him to the brink of the dark river of death. Soon afterward my mother was sitting by his bedside with his hand in hers, and his lips moved once again. 'Margaret,' he said, and the voice we loved was silent forever."

The wife that he left behind him received the log house and patch of land, and some months later, the legislature appropriated \$1,700 to pay the salary for the dead man's unfinished term. For the eight children, however, there was no other legacy than loving admonitions. His will, written at the time when Houston knew that he had not long to live, contained the curiously characteristic provision that his sons should be "taught an entire contempt for novels and light reading," together with the further instructions that they "should receive solid and useful education, and that no portion of their time be devoted to the study of abstract science. I greatly desire that they may possess a thorough knowledge of the English language, with a good knowledge of the Latin language. I request that they be instructed in the Holy Scriptures, and next to these, that they be rendered thoroughly a knowledge of geography and history."

Sam Houston

Outside of his small property, his one possession of value was the sword that he had worn at San Jacinto, and this he left to "Young Sam," directing that it "be drawn only in defense of the constitution, the laws and liberties of his country. If any attempt be made to assail one of these, I wish it to be used in vindication."

The worn, wasted body was carried to the town's little burial ground, and laid to the first rest that it had ever known. Doubtless there was no one at hand with courage enough to attempt the compression of that tremendous life into the small confines of an epitaph, and the plain slab was left with this brief inscription: "General Sam Houston. Born March 2, 1793. Died July 26, 1863." How simple to have written: "Sam Houston—Last of the Titans"!

[THE END]

